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Whither Thou Goest
By
Katharine Bates

Chap-Book Stories



WHITHER THOU GOEST

THE wind stirred the tops of the maple trees in the Quinsby front yard, and the old man who stood on the steps, watching the shadows and the moonlight, sighed as he heard the soft rustling sound. He glanced back into the house, through the hall, into the bedroom, where his wife was lighting a candle preparatory to turning down the bed.

“I reckon I ’ll jest step down there a minit,” he whispered to himself, and hurriedly but softly went down the steps. Far down in a corner of the yard, near the front fence, a hammock hung between two small pin oaks, and it was here the old man went, looking back uneasily now and then, as if he expected a call from his wife. The hammock was an old one, and had evidently hung there all summer, for the meshes were torn and all the gay colors had

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faded to a dingy gray. It tossed lightly in the breeze as the wind grew stronger, and the old man's hand trembled as he caught at its swaying folds.

"Girls," he whispered softly, "are you both here? Are you pushing the swing, Winnie?"

A sudden flutter went over the leaves of a lilac bush near, and he turned quickly to it. "That 's Nan's laugh — gigglin' at yore old pa jest as usual, Nanny girl?"

"Father," his wife called from the porch, "you better come in."

He turned and hurried back to her. She stood on the steps with the candle still in her hand, its tiny flame looking almost blue in the moonlight.

"Mebbe a storm is comin' up and you 'll ketch cold," she said when he reached her. Her voice was stern, but the look in her gray eyes was as sad as the trembling of his lips when he said to her, "Ain't it jest the sorter night the girls use' to beg to stay out, and not have to go to bed yet a while?"

"It's a mighty pretty night," she answered. She followed him into their room, closing the hall door after her.

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“Oh, don’t shet it, Mira, don’t ! It seems as if you was shettin’ the children out.”

Mrs. Quinsby turned to him. “Hiram, I must speak out to you,” she said. “I don’t see any more’n you why the Lord thought best to take our girls, our two good, pretty girls, but He has done it, and it ain’t right for you to be lettin’ yoreself fancy you hear ’em ’round on nights like this. I’ve faith to believe if we can keep ourselves outer sin for the rest of our days we shall see the children again — but not here, Hiram, not here in the old place.”

“I know it ain’t Nan and Winnie sure ’nough,” Hiram answered apologetically, “but these nights make me think of ’em a terrible lot — and the leaves goin’ so and so in the wind does sound real like Nan’s laugh. Mira, I was out in the garden while you was puttin’ the dishes away and strainin’ the milk, and jest as the moon came out and the wind started up I heard a laugh like Nan’s, and then something danced by me that must have been Winnie. I hurried down the path after it, and there by the poppy bed were the girls, rompin’ jest like children again, ’most grown girls that they are. As the wind came up more they laughed again, not so soft as they had

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been doin', but a real burst of gay laughin' like they use' to work themselves up to, and then they ran towards the arbor and peeped out from the honeysuckle, and Nan called, 'Here, Pa,' and Winnie sorter sang out, 'Father, Father,' in her soft way."

Mrs. Quinsby put her hands on his shoulders and gave him a little shake. Her eyes were frightened, and her voice came quick and stern.

"Hush, Father," she said. "You are doin' yoreself an injury. The girls are in heaven, not here, and don't you let go yore grip on yore mind. Think of me, Hiram — you've got me left, and I can't stand the thought of the lonesomeness if you let your senses go. You and me have been married so many years, Hiram, we could n't get on without each other. Why, it seems to me the good Lord would surely let me get foolish too — mebbe it ain't fittin' for one of my years to say it, but I'd ruther, yes, I'd *ruther*, if it comes down to choosin' between my senses and you, Hiram!"

The far-away look disappeared from Hiram's eyes. "I was jest thinkin', Mira," he said reassuringly. "It was only that the night was so powerful pretty. But now we won't talk of the children any more."

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Mrs. Quinsby drew him back to the porch again.

“Don’t think me hard, Father,” she said entreatingly, “but I want you to be sure. Look over there towards the church; you can see the dark heap of trees against the sky in the churchyard, can’t you? There’s where the girls are — there’s where they are.”

“Why, of course, Mira. Though how the Lord could take those pretty young things, and our only two, that had come to us when we was long past hopin’, is more’n I can see.”

They went to bed, but later in the night Mrs. Quinsby waked suddenly. Her first thought was that the storm was really coming and she had left the pantry windows open. She slipped out of bed, but as she realized that her movement did not disturb her husband, a blind terror came over her; she struck match after match before she could make herself believe he was not there. Then she picked up a shawl and flung it over her nightgown, and, regardless of her bare feet, rushed out to the garden. The wind was blowing hard and the moon was half hidden by the lightly scudding clouds, but Hiram’s laugh — the pleased, indulgent laugh that his girls’

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nonsense had so often produced — guided her to him.

“That you, Mother?” he called as she ran down the path. “What a couple of colts you’ve brought up, Mira. Reckon you could find their beat anywheres in Mizzourer for friskiness? Just see those girls racin’ round — a storm comin’ up always did go to their heads. Hear Nan laugh! Ain’t she the greatest girl for foolin’ you ever saw?”

He pointed to some tall hollyhocks that she could see were bending low with the wind, and added, “Watch her bow; Nan was always as easy movin’ in her body as a saplin’ or a tall flower.”

Mrs. Quinsby put her arm around his shoulder. “Oh, he’s let go — you’ve let go, Father, and I’m left! I can’t stand the lonesomeness, I can’t, I can’t!”

They moved toward the arbor. As they passed under the drooping honeysuckle, Hiram laughed aloud.

“They are putting their hands over our eyes to make us guess which is which — the little geese!”

Mrs. Quinsby put her hand to her forehead and pressed the cool honeysuckle leaves against her eyes.

By Katharine Bates

She laughed too. "I knew it," she whispered, "I knew the Almighty would let me go with him. He knew how it was with Hiram and me." Aloud she said, "I guess Winnie. Yore hands ain't as soft as Winnie's, Nan."

An Impassable Gulf

By

Katharine Bates



AN IMPASSABLE GULF

PETER ELSTON'S two nieces, Nancy Rollins and Hester Elston, stood on opposite sides of the frame, working together silently. Suddenly Hester dropped her needle, straightened her lithe young figure, and throwing back her pretty head, said hurriedly :

“I don't see how you can feel so, Nan! You must see how good he is, as well as bein' different from any boy we've ever known round here on the Prairie. Ain't he always thoughtful 'bout pleasin' Uncle Peter? And he's gone to church reg'lar with us every Sunday he's been here, ain't he?”

She pauses, catching her breath after her eager speech, and looking yearningly at Nancy. The older girl's pale face hardened as she caught the imploring glance.

“He seems to me to be very worldly,” she said coldly.

The color rushed to Hester's cheeks, and she bent quickly over the frame; for a few moments

An Impassable Gulf

she sewed vigorously, saying to herself with fierce indignation, as she worked :

“I declare if I think Nancy is so spiritual, after all — a judgin’ Fred like that, and all because he told her he liked to go now and then to the the-*a*-tre ! ”

Resentment, however, never lingered long in Hester’s heart, and at last she raised her head again.

“I wish you did feel different, Nan,” she said gently. “I can’t bear to think of you not takin’ to the man I’m goin’ to marry. You and me have always seemed jest like sisters ever since Uncle Pete took us to raise.”

Nancy’s blue eyes met the pleading brown ones more gently this time.

“Yes,” she said slowly, “you *have* been jest like a sister to me, Hetty.”

Hester ran around the frame and threw her arms around her cousin with the eager expression of affection which always embarrassed Nancy.

“Nan,” she cried, “I jest do wish you could see it the way I do. Fred is so good, and it’s only because he lives in town that he has gotten to like

By Katharine Bates

such things as the-*a*-tres. You do take to him sure 'nough, don't you?"

Nancy's voice quivered as she answered the passionate appeal.

"I know he's got pleasant ways, and he's right principled about a lot of things, but, Hetty, there's no denyin' he puts pleasure before servin' the Lord, and we are told mighty plain in the Bible not to make friends with the Mammon of unrighteousness."

Hester bit her lip.

"There's some folks, and real good ones, too, who think havin' some pleasures like Fred cares for and bein' real down good Christians, too, ain't incompatible," she said, struggling to speak calmly.

"There's a gulf," Nancy said firmly, "between me and the-*a*-tre goers, and I'm mighty sorry for you, Hester."

"You need n't be," cried Hester, impatiently. "I'm happy and satisfied about marryin' Fred!"

"What's all this talk about marryin'?" Uncle Peter called in at the doorway, as he paused to wave his bundle of birds and squirrels at his nieces. "Jest leave a couple of girls alone, and their tongues are sure to get to waggin' 'bout marryin'!"

An Impassable Gulf

Come along, Hetty, and help me pick and clean this lot. It's been a fine huntin' day, if 't is a trifle coldish for an old man like me."

"You old!" laughed Hester, as they settled themselves by the kitchen fire.

"Yes, I am gettin' on," cried Uncle Peter, seriously, "and I don't see how I am goin' to do without you, Hester. You are sure you want to marry Fred?"

"Yes, sure," said Hester, quickly. "Uncle Pete, wasn't it jest marvellous for him to fall in love with me, when he's a town man and knows such a lot of girls with better manners and all that?"

Uncle Peter looked meditatively at the delicate rose complexion, the large brown eyes, and the soft, waving hair.

"I don't see as it was so dreadful queer," he said. "You'd pass in a crowd, Het."

There was silence for a little while, Hester dreaming happy dreams of her future, and Uncle Peter groaning inwardly at the prospect of being left to live alone with the more spiritual of his nieces. Suddenly a gleam of hope came to him, and he said:

By Katharine Bates

“Mebbe you can’t marry him after all — town folks have a great way of not makin’ a livin’, Hetty.”

“I know it,” admitted Hester, almost despondently, but her face brightened as she added ; “but it is such a great big store Fred is clerkin’ in that I’m jest sure we won’t have to wait long, Uncle Pete.”

The waiting time proved to be as short as Hester and Fred had hoped, for in spite of his “worldliness” Fred was a faithful young fellow, and the promotion which made possible a tiny flat, and housekeeping on a limited scale, came even before he had expected it. Uncle Peter did his best to be cheery at the simple little wedding, and Nancy had baked as many cakes for them as if the young couple were not starting out on a sinful career. Hester prized keenly the expressions of affection which had been rare up to the time when her uncle and cousin had realized what a difference her going would make in their lives, and her grief at leaving her home amazed and almost annoyed Fred, who had grown to look upon himself as her deliverer from a life which seemed very cramped and hard to him.

An Impassable Gulf

“I wish there was somethin’ I could do for you, Hetty,” Uncle Peter said, when the last of the wedding guests had departed, and he and Nancy were hurrying Fred and Hester away to the train, for they were going at once to their new home. He took her carpet-bag from her, and awkwardly helped her to button the linen duster, which Nancy had insisted should be worn to the station to protect the new travelling dress from the mud.

“There is,” said Hester, tremulously. “Uncle Pete, if you could jest make Nancy see that goin’ to the the-*a*-tre ain’t incompatible with goin’ to Heaven some day, I’d be greatly obliged to you.”

Uncle Peter drew a long breath.

“You’ve done a sight of work here, Hetty,” he said tenderly, “and I’ve been dreadful fond of you, too, but I’ll be damned if I will try to get a new notion into Nancy’s head, even for you!”

Hester sighed. “I s’pose it would be askin’ a good deal of you,” she said simply “but, Uncle Pete, you will remind her anyway that Fred and I won’t be able to afford goin’ more ’n once in a long, long time, won’t you? Now good-bye, Uncle.”

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He helped her into the wagon, and while Fred and Nancy were crossing the yard, he stood looking at her with his lips twitching nervously.

“Good-bye, Hester,” Nancy said, climbing up on the step of the wagon. The two kissed each other, and Hester clung for a second to her cousin’s neck.

“Oh, Nan,” she whispered, “we have always played together and done our work together — *don’t* feel hard to me.”

Nancy looked down at her sadly.

“I ain’t a mite hard,” she said gently. “I ain’t judgin’, Hetty, only there’s a gulf. Good-bye.”

She turned to Fred and held out her hand. “I wish you well,” she said, in her clear, calm tones, and then she opened the yard gate and stood inside, leaving Uncle Peter a chance for his farewell.

He wrung Fred’s hand, but no words came from his trembling lips.

“I’ll be very good to her,” Fred said hurriedly. “Good-bye, sir. I hope you won’t mind if I say I consider it an honor to be your nephew.”

At the time Uncle Peter grasped only the first

An Impassable Gulf

words. "Yes," he said, "be good to her, Fred — she's a good girl, a good girl."

He stepped on the hub of the wheel, and Hester threw her arms around him, kissing vehemently his gray head and wrinkled cheeks.

"Don't forget me," she sobbed. "Oh, how can I leave you and Nan and the old place? Good-bye, and I love you, I do so love you, Uncle Pete!"

At a sign from Nancy the hired man whipped up the horses. As they drove away Hester looked back at the clump of oak-trees around the house, and then at the two figures at the yard gate.

"I wish I'd done more for 'em all these years they've been so good to me," she said, the tears streaming down her cheeks. Fred held her hand close between both of his, but he made no answer, for her grief dazed him. He knew that many elements in her life had been distasteful to her; and why should a woman who was marrying the man she loved, and was moreover going to town to live, grieve in this way? The hired man turned in his seat and gave the needed word of comfort.

"You've done a sight for 'em," he said warmly,

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“and you ain’t no cause to fret, Miss Hetty. We’ll all miss you terrible.”

Uncle Peter wandered restlessly around the farm until dinner-time. An aching heart was a new experience to him, and one that he did not know how to meet. He went into the orchard and picked up apple after apple, and after a mere taste flung each of them away; as he left the orchard he stopped to look back at the mass of Spanish needle and goldenrod, through which he had just made his way.

“How she did like all that yeller stuff,” he said aloud. “What a sight of interest she took in everything about the place. She was a good girl, and I wish I’d a quit swearin’ — ’t would have tickled her mightily. Hanged if I don’t quit it now!”

Nancy had an unusually good dinner ready for him. Preparing it had helped her to pass the morning, for Uncle Peter’s was not the only aching heart. She helped him lavishly to half a dozen vegetables, but for the first time within her memory of him, he had no appetite. He pushed back his chair before she brought his pie, and as he did so a sudden wave of antagonism to her came over him;

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he had never spoken to her of her stern words to Hester, but now involuntarily his criticism of her slipped from him.

“Blessed if I can see how you could have been so hard on Fred, and let pore Hetty go away feelin’ so broke up,” he said impetuously.

Nancy pressed her lips together firmly.

“I never judged Fred himself,” she said. “I always separated the sin from the sinner, and we are bidden to be unceasing in denouncing sin.”

Uncle Peter said no more; he rose from the table and went out to the porch, and as he sat there Fred’s words recurred to him, and roused a glow of affectionate feeling.

“Proud to be my nephew,” he repeated. “He’s a fine feller, he is, and Hetty’s done well for herself, if it is pretty hard on us to be left.”

He went back to the dining-room, where Nancy was clearing the dishes away, and opening the door he called in vehemently:

“Blamed if I care if he takes her to the the-a-tre every night in the week!”

Nancy turned a startled face to him, forgetful of the fact that tears were rolling down her cheeks.

By Katharine Bates

The unexpected sight of her grief touched her uncle keenly ; he had never before seen her cry, and going over to her and laying his hand on her shoulder, he said affectionately, "I'm a reg'lar old brute, Nan. You must excuse me, and remember it's losin' Hetty that's sorter upset me. I orter be better 'n usual to you, instead of meaner, for I can see you are grievin' too."

"I have more cause to be grievin' even than you, Uncle Peter," Nancy said sadly, "for there's an impassable gulf between Hetty and me now."

Uncle Peter's hand slipped from her shoulder.

"Gulfs be damned," he said impatiently.

In a Garden
By
Neith Boyce

IN A GARDEN

OVER the wall of the Mission, against the glowing west, the tops of the trees flickered in the wind from the sea, shot through with level glancing arrows of clear light. The sky was all astir with little soft, gold-tipped clouds. To the languid hush of the hot day had succeeded a subtle animation like the smile on the lips of a sleeping woman.

On this awakening air the last organ-notes of the vesper service died away, and were echoed by the slow, rhythmic swing of the tall eucalyptus-trees. The rustle of the leaves imitated the sound of the devout dispersing from the chapel ; and a magnolia shook out from its great white chalices an incense more penetrating than any wafted before the altar. Suddenly all this gentle derision seemed to voice itself in a burst of mocking laughter, faint and far away, like the airy merriment of elves. The sound approached and grew louder, running through the

In a Garden

notes of a treble scale. And the trees in the monks' garden seemed to bend and listen and to beckon while they shook all over with malicious glee.

Scurrying over the ground beyond, with bare, dusty feet, appeared a group of creatures pulling each other by extended arms, or brown garments which seemed a part of the earth, or by their braids of strong, black hair. Writhing in this rough play they flung themselves against the wall. A pale-faced girl in a scarlet blouse, like a cactus-flower bursting from its dull sheath, threw up her arms into the dense, dark foliage of an overhanging fig-tree and dragged down the bough.

"They are ripe! — what did I tell you?" she cried, as at a touch a purple, bloomy fig fell into her hand. She tore it open and fastened her teeth, sharp and white as those of a squirrel, in the pink flesh.

Her companions hung back, looking at her.

"If we are caught —"

"What do we care? Cowards! There — now you can put all the blame on me. Eat, then, little pigs that you are!"

Her heavy-lidded eyes were cold and contemptu-

By Neith Boyce

ously smiling. Hanging to the bough with both hands, she shook it roughly, and the ripe figs fell in a shower, some flattening to pulp on the ground. The girls flung themselves down, and, chattering, gathered the unspoiled fruit into the skirts of their gowns.

"It is true ; they are better than ours," cried one.

"Trust the holy fathers to have the best," added another, lowering her voice.

"They taste better," said Fiora, the tall girl in the scarlet blouse, "because we are stealing them." And she licked her red lips with satisfaction.

"There must be better ones higher up," said a fourth, greedily, standing with her hands on her broad hips and her head thrown back.

"Let us see," responded Fiora.

Again she caught hold of the drooping branch, drew herself up, and in an instant the thick foliage hid her from sight. Her companions, half-smothered with laughter, besought her to return.

"Oh, if you are seen !"

"Catch !" cried Fiora.

A rain of soft bodies fell, thumping them about

In a Garden

the shoulders. Through the parted leaves an impudent face looked down, framed like a young faun's in living green.

"I am going higher — I am going to look into the garden!"

"Oh! Oh!" in frightened and delighted chorus.
"You dare not!"

"Listen, my children," said Fiora, condescendingly. "They say no woman has ever seen this garden. Well, I have a great mind to be the first!"

Lying along the thick branch, she listened smilingly.

"It is forbidden!"

"You will be punished!"

"The holy fathers —"

"What have they in their garden," she cried at last, "that is so sacred that we may not see it? Would our feet soil the grass or the paths?"

The girls looked at one another slyly and hid their faces; and their malicious laughter, stifled with difficulty and uncontrollable, mingled again with the eager murmurs of the trees.

Fiora, herself laughing, she scarcely knew why,

By Neith Boyce

disappeared, the leaves closing behind her like a green sea. She crept along the great branch until her feet found something firm—the top of the wall. Clinging to the trunk of the tree which leaned against this wall, she tried to pierce the thick layers of foliage below her, but in vain ; nothing was to be seen in the garden. She swore softly. Then, in trying to extend herself upon a branch which projected into the garden, she slipped, catching vainly at the nearest twigs, and with a thrill of alarm came to her feet upon the forbidden soil. She clenched her hands, full of bruised leaves, against her breast, as she crouched in the shelter of the drooping boughs. Startled by the noise of her fall, her companions took flight like a covey of birds, with a rustle, a faint murmur — silence.

Fiora sank to her knees and remained for some moments motionless, gazing out into the garden. In the dusk, deepened by the shadow of encircling trees, nothing was visible save narrow paths strewn with opal-colored sea-shells glimmering amid fresh turf, and roses blooming in masses along these walks and hiding the wall under their heavy leaves, thick with flowers like pale flames. Silence — except for

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the applauding whisper of the trees and the splash of water. There was no one in the garden.

Taking courage, the intruder pushed her way out from under the boughs of the fig-tree. The freshly sprinkled grass caressed her feet. The perfume of the roses and the magnolia blossoms, becoming more intense as the dew began to gather, surrounded her like an invisible presence, seeming to draw her on. She stole softly forward, her eyes alert for the least warning and alive with curiosity. The path led her through an arbor drifted deep with the perfumed snow of wistaria, and between banks of golden pansies set in mosaic borders. At the intersection of this gleaming streak with another a fountain played in a white basin, tossing high in the air a crystal ball. The crest of the plume of water caught a gleam of golden light, and the transparent ball glittered as it rose every instant from shadow. Fiora paused to watch it and to follow the arrowy glidings of the gold-fish in the basin. The short southern twilight was already ended. It was now dark — the hour at which the fathers took their evening meal. Yielding, therefore, to her fancy, she followed the windings of the paths, stopping

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recklessly to pluck now a scarlet pomegranate, which she ate with puckered lips; now a rose, crimson or yellow, or a long spray of white roses with pink hearts, set close together on the stem. Huge cacti, their gray, distorted bodies spotted with blood-colored blossoms, stood here and there in clumps. Banana trees waved softly their long, graceful fronds. The wind stirred with a dry rustle among palms with broad trunks and large fans, and others, slender and lofty, with crests like stacked swords, and among masses of pampas-grass tufted with great white plumes. Along the wall, to which now and then Fiora's wanderings in the confined space brought her, grew apricot and peach trees heavy with ripe fruit. These perfect sweets also she tasted capriciously and threw away half-eaten. The place exerted a strange influence over her. The hour, the delicious thrill of danger, the heavy perfumes, intoxicated her. It seemed that the trees bent toward her to murmur something, that the pale faces of the flowers held some mysterious message. They looked friendly; they appeared to smile knowingly at her, to encourage her, to urge her on. Vaguely she felt all this breathing, eager life a part of her, belonging to

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her. She threw back her head, turning it from side to side with an air of satisfied possession, drawing in the cool air through her nostrils and parted lips with sensuous delight — this pale creature whose eyes showed a savage response to the cajoling beauty about her.

Convinced at last that the garden held no secret, save that of certain flowers and fruits cultivated to unknown perfection, — for she had explored it from the limiting wall to where the pallid outline of some building of the Mission gleamed through the trees, — she came back to the fountain and sat down on the wooden bench at the path's edge, her flowers heaped in her lap. She gave herself a few moments more to watch the leaping ball, which now sparkled like silver in the midst of glittering spray. A shaft of moonlight, striking through the trees upon the jet of water, crept steadily downward. The girl, her eyes fixed on this trembling column of white fire and foam, fell in a vague, trance-like dream. The ripple of the fountain in her ears drowned the echo of slow footsteps advancing along the path.

It was Father Anselmo's custom, while digesting his supper of meat pasty and chocolate, to pace

By Neith Boyce

the garden, whose beauty seldom failed to inspire him with poetical images, and to add each evening some dozen lines to his panegyric ode on Saint Francis. Anselmo was, in fact, a poet, — but a poet whose strictly regulated fancy never openly strayed beyond the confines of the cloister. His gentle muse sang consecrated themes alone. And if, surrounded by an indolent, veiled fervor of tropical nature, apt to long, arid trances, and to sudden outbursts of fierce luxuriance, his imagination was sometimes troubled, these secret vagaries were repressed or found no acknowledged utterance. In his black, shapeless robe, above which his placid face showed like a sickly moon, the father, whether meditating on the pasty or Saint Francis, seemed no prey to the poetic ardor; its afflatus left him undizzied and peaceful. Yet the mystery of the night, the garden's magic, must have struck some responsive chord within him. For how else should his bodily eyes have beheld beneath the shadow of the acacia bushes a creature not human, surely not divine; no spiritual vision, but an apparition born of the earth and evil. It sat half-visible, buried to the chin in flowers, motionless, its face a mere pale

In a Garden

shimmer, its great shadowy eyes fixed upon him. These eyes were terrifying.

Anselmo retreated some steps upon their discovery ; then, after much hesitation, advanced again, extending the cross of his rosary and muttering with trembling lips certain words of proved potency. But neither holy symbol nor exorcism availed against the evil spirit. It refused to flee ; sat dumb — it seemed to Anselmo disdainful. Suddenly, wrathful, he took another step forward ; the creature drew in its breath sharply, with an audible sound ; its lips parted, showing a row of gleaming teeth. Anselmo paused.

This was, he perceived, the spirit of the garden, and it was plainly hostile. Was he, then, the intruder ? Vaguely a sense of helpless fright invaded his soul. Yes, the trees were in league with this being ; they bent towards him threateningly ! The air was full of veiled alarms. What of the rose-bushes which even now reached out clutching hands to detain him ? An overblown white rose broke and fell in a soft shower about his shoulders, and he started ; a bat swooped down with swift, filmy wings, just grazing his head ; he shrank back.

By Neith Boyce

Could it be that he was in danger, that his wandering thoughts were known, that his sinful fancies had thus taken shape to confound him? Anselmo crossed himself. It was true—moved by the garden's spell he had sometime in reverie invoked the animating principle of this beauty of earth, which he knew well was soulless and evil—and behold it incarnate!

Yet the apparition did not menace him overtly, perhaps it felt his spiritual armor proof. Nevertheless, it was his part to fly possible danger, to deliver over the unhallowed domain to its true possessor. What part had he in these caresses of the breeze, these wooings of flowers, these marriages of insects, this glamour of nocturnal magic?

Knowing, as he did, the evil power of the moon at its full, how had he been persuaded to walk in debatable ground where that demoniac glory, rising warm and wanton above the trees, could mock and threaten him? Under the branches of the acacia the shadow sat still in deeper shadow; save that the rays of the moon fell upon two slim, naked feet, which the short grass could not cover. It had taken, then, the form of a woman, that the garden

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and its tradition might be doubly desecrated! Anselmo's indignation was not fierce enough to nerve his soul, weakened by mystic terrors. He turned to fly, but, instead, uttered an exclamation, calling in a trembling voice :

“ Brother Emanuel ! ”

“ I am coming, ” was the answer.

Another black robe, another pale face, appeared beside him, and, like him, started back at perceiving the strange figure. After consultation in whispers the bolder monk approached the acacia.

“ This is no spirit, Brother Anselmo — it is a woman ! ” he cried.

“ A woman ! How could a woman get into the garden ? ”

The first speaker cast a troubled glance in the direction of the high wall.

“ True, ” he said uncertainly. “ Still it must be. ”

But involuntarily he moved a step nearer his companion.

Both glanced down at the slender feet in the grass. These seemed to move, and the spirit, or woman, turned her head swiftly from side to side. Her

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breath came quicker, but the monks could not hear it, or they might have taken courage.

“It is astonishing,” murmured Brother Emanuel, uneasily.

While they stood undecided between the attack and the retreat, suddenly from the chapel near by the organ gave voice in a deep, swelling chord, which climbed by subtle and suave modulations and soared aloft into a tender melody.

“It is Brother Angelo,” whispered Anselmo.

“It is holy music!” said Emanuel, devoutly, and he made the sign of the cross in the air before him.

The tremulous notes, growing louder, drowned the rustle of the leaves, the plash of the fountain, the sigh of the wind. It seemed as though the garden hushed half-unwillingly to listen, when a voice, humanly deep and sweet, but spiritualized into something not less than divine, took up the melody and bore it higher and heavenward, pouring out into the night a flood of ecstasy and aspiration. The march of the music was solemn and splendid, and its soul was a joy unearthly and beyond utterance.

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The black-robed brothers stood and listened, rebuked and dumb, turning their faces toward the glimmering wall of the chapel, and forgetting for a moment the fears which had agitated them, with their cause. What were all the potencies of the passionate earth, so easily diverted from good, against this royal dominion ?

The evil-seeming spell was broken. A sudden movement, no sound but a stirring of the air, recalled their attention. The foliage of the acacia trembled as though a bird had taken wing. The bench was vacant, flowers strewn the ground before it, the presence had vanished. Her white feet or a breath of air had borne her away. The diapason of the organ drowned the sound her flight might have made ; and the trees bent as though to bury in shadow her possible path. Emanuel made a long step forward.

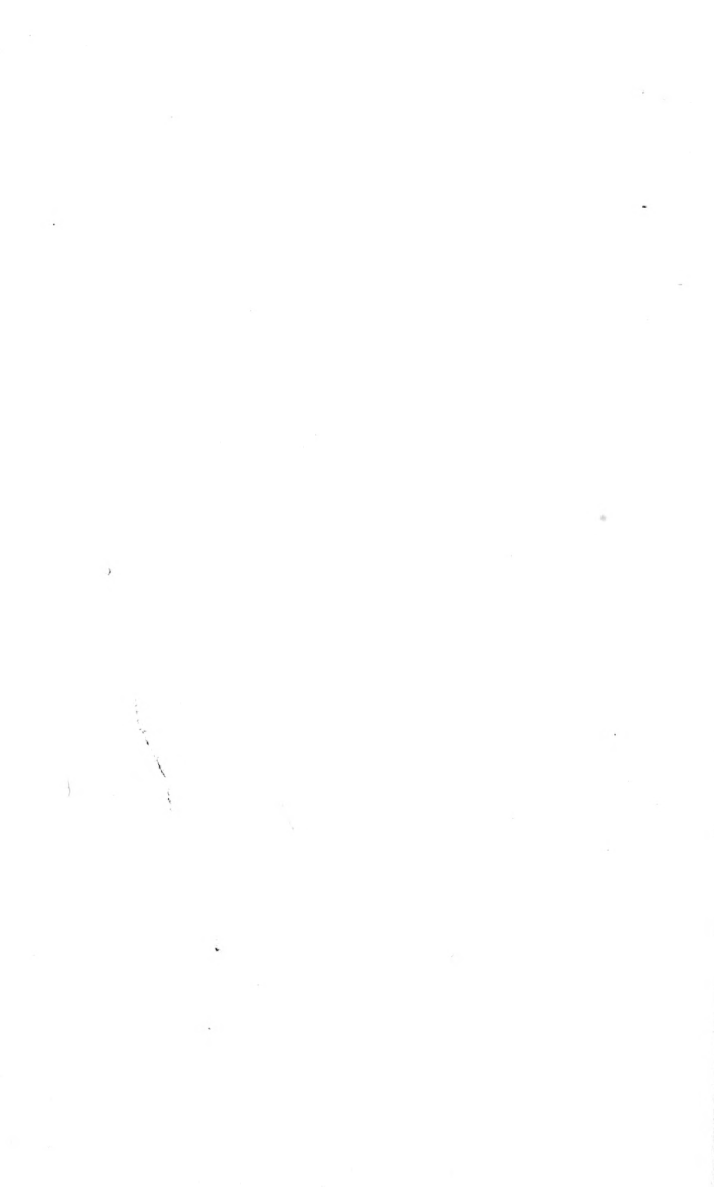
“ Woman or spirit, she is gone ! ” he cried, and stooped to see what trace of her those scattered roses might show. Anselmo grasped his companion’s sleeve. \

“ Do not touch them,” he entreated, glancing fearfully over his shoulder. “ Who knows what spell is upon them ? ”

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True, when found next morning, withered and scentless, these flowers appeared commonplace enough. Nor did there exist other proof that on this spot two brothers of the order had beheld a strange and dangerous vision. None the less was their sober account accepted implicitly by the brethren, of whom the wiser ever thereafter avoided to walk in the garden at the moon's full; though certain of the more youthful were known to adventure themselves at that place and season.

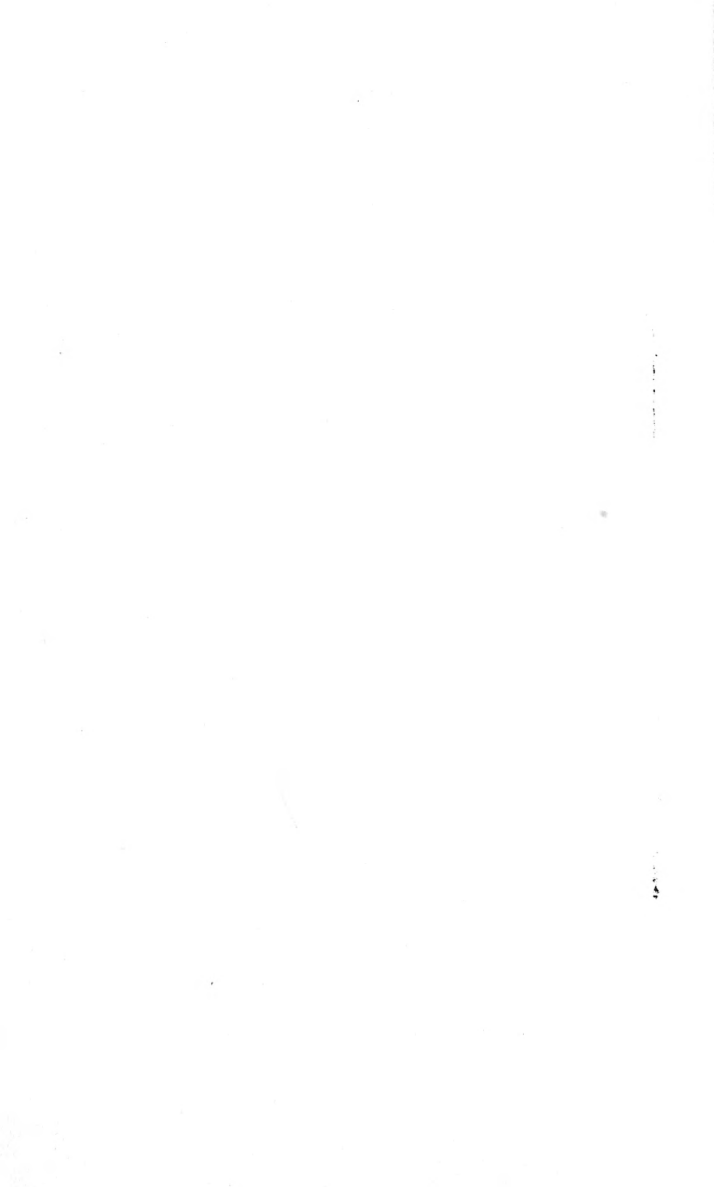
It is not recorded that their daring and zeal met with any reward or recognition. Nor, perhaps, is this to be wondered at. For if any wandering spirit, coveting, yet not daring to enter the garden, had strayed near to the confining wall, it must have heard daily the solemn chant of the Church's exorcism directed against all powers unholy; it must daily have beheld a slow procession of monks make the circuit of the shell-strewn paths, sprinkling the ground with holy-water to purify it from the contaminating touch of a woman's foot. And if, spirit or woman, it were still undeterred, there was Angelo's music at evening—like another flaming sword at the gate of this Eveless Eden!



Oreste's Patron

By

Grace Ellery Channing



ORESTE'S PATRON

THE Signore Americano, musing over his morning coffee on the Villa terrace, gazed intently into the distance where Florence lay invisible behind the hills.

“Buon’ giorno, Signore !” called Oreste, reining in Elisabetta and lifting his cap with a smile.

“Buon’ giorno !” returned the Signore, starting. “Ah, you are going to the city, and I wanted to go myself !”

Oreste looked troubled.

“Signore, — how much I am sorry ! It displeases me, but I am already promised to my patron. When one is poor, one must think of the francs for the family,” he added apologetically.

The Signore, who knew no such necessity, frowned.

“This is the fifth time this Carnivale — and you just married ! If I had a *sposina* —”

“The Signore’s *sposina* would lack for nothing,” smiled Oreste. “We others, — we must do as we

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can. As for Gioja, she goes to pass the day with her *nonna* at Vincigliata. I will bring the Signore's mail as usual."

The Signore waved his hand impatiently, and knocked the ashes from his cigarette, then, as the shabby cab, with Elisabetta pulling heroically back against the steepness, wound from sight, his glance softened. It was a piece of fortune surely for a Vignola cabman to have a city patron. Fortunes were not to be made up here where nobody but the *forestieri*, who came from time to time to make a *villeggiatura* in one or another of the villas, would think of wasting francs for the sole purpose of getting somewhere. The inhabitants stayed where they found themselves placed by Providence. To all intents, Vignola might be a hundred miles from Florence instead of a bare six. Besides, a stranger Signore passes with the season, but a city patron remains. Nuisance as it was to have his own plans conflicted with, the Signore forgave Oreste.

Fifteen minutes later this melting mood congealed again, as a slender figure stole quietly down the Way.

It was Gioja, walking with her usual listless grace.

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Her small head, its crisply waved Tuscan hair bound with a kerchief of dull blue, was carried far back as no kerchiefed head has a right to be ; and her eyes, blue as the kerchief but not dull, looked straight ahead, dilated and musing. She did not see the Signore, — a thing that could have befallen no other girl in the village, unless it were blind Chiara, and the Signore watched her go with a frown, — for this was not the direction of Vincigliata. And why was she starting so early, unless to defeat the glances with which all these closed doors would soon be alive ?

Yet he continued to watch her. There were other girls in the village just as pretty. Many a strain of noble blood had gone to the making of these Vignolese peasants. This was not the first girl the Signore had seen who looked as if— change her gown and tie a bonnet over her hair—she might loll in her carriage of an afternoon at the Cascine with the best of the fine ladies in the city below. But there was no other whom the Signore ever leaned over the wall to look after. And as he leaned his frown deepened ; he was sorry for Oreste ; but— marry a girl like that and leave her

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alone, in Italy ! Anybody might foresee the end. And he frowned again, not at Gioja this time, who had disappeared from view, but at a mental image, wearing, it is true, an air dangerously like that of Oreste's *sposa*.

Yes, indeed, anybody might foretell the end. That was what the whole community, already buzzing with the scandal, said. And it was exactly what the Padre said when, five minutes later, he came up the path and sank upon the marble seat, mopping his brow beneath the beaver hat.

"I have been to Oreste's," he said apologetically, "and thought I would look in upon the Signore in passing. There was nobody there."

The Signore, engaged in pouring red wine for his guest, made no response, and the priest stole a troubled glance at him as he took the glass from his hand.

"Perhaps, Signore, you may have seen them pass, and can tell me if that child went with her husband?"

"No," said the Signore, after a minute's deliberation, "I could not."

His guest sighed as he sipped the wine. He had

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grown gray in the service of the village. He had known Gioja from her babyhood. His was the hand which had held and oiled and dipped her at the font, and had led her from then until her present estate; and he, if any one, had a right to borrow trouble, seeing that all troubles were brought to him in the end. His fine, thin lips shut above the wine-glass in the sensitive line which marks the better of Rome's two types. His soul was straight and simple. The one vanity it owned was to be on terms of companionship with the occupant of the big villa. The half hour on its terrace or in its salotto formed his social dissipation, and dearly did he prize the importance it gave him in the eyes of his flock. Nay, it gave importance to the whole community.

"Not every village has a priest like ours," said the gossips, complacently, "that a so-educated stranger Signore would make so much of."

Moreover, if his people were poor, God alone knows how poor their priest was, and the Signore possessed a fine taste in wines, — true Chianti, a very different thing from *vino rosso* at eighty centesimi the flask, — while his lavishness was that of his country.

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As for the Signore, he would pour the oil from a fresh flask any time to unseal the lips pressed together as now over the case of Oreste's *sposa*.

"The truth is," sighed the priest, "the end is too easy to foresee. The child is not like others; and there is nothing worse than that. That's what Luigi's *sposa* said yesterday when I rebuked her for thinking evil, and recalled to her how Gioja helped nurse her three through the fever only last spring. 'Oh, I'm not saying she has n't a heart,' said Luigi's *sposa*; 'but you can't deny that all is not right when a girl is different from all the rest; it is better to have less heart and be more like one's neighbors.' And Luigi's wife had reason. Nothing is worse than to be different from all the folk about you. When I had her safely married, I thought indeed there would be an end of trouble; — Heaven grant it do not prove a beginning!"

"Does she not love her husband?"

"Who can tell?" sighed the priest, impatiently. "Oreste is not one to set the Arno afire, but he is a good lad. But about her he is a mule, — a very mule. Would you believe, Signore, when I ventured a word, — I, whose duty it is, — he flared

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up like a Befana torch, — he whose manner to me ordinarily is a lesson to the community!”

The Signore smiled and reflected upon the strength of man.

“One would say I had spoken ill of the Saints,” continued the exasperated priest. “And the thing is becoming insufferable, — such a tale of scandal as some one whispers to me every day. One would think she has neither eyes nor ears, and cares not whether she has friends or foes for neighbors.”

There is, in truth, no such broad and flowery path to unpopularity as this which Gioja undeviatingly pursued. Nobody who elects to be unlike his neighbors gets social good of it. Had not the Signore himself seen?

Bad enough it was to have her sitting wide-eyed and absolutely indifferent at her machine, and so pretty that one could see the youths looking at her when they pretended not to; or mooning over her straw work with never a word of gossip or a little story about a friend, more than if they were all stones: but what did these absences all by herself mean, which looked the worse now that she was a decent man's wife? It was an absolute scandal —

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which is only another name for a godsend sometimes — to a sober community.

Oreste might pretend to shut his eyes, — he had always been a fool about her ; but it could not be asked that all the village should do the same, especially those girls who would have made decent wives if any one had given *them* the chance, and those lads who would have known how to keep a wife in order if they had taken one.

The priest, thinking of these things, sighed. He, too, might affect blindness ; but he would need to be stone deaf as well to escape hearing what every tongue in the village felt it a duty and a privilege to confide to him daily.

“It must be admitted that the Signorina Americana has something to answer for,” the priest wound up, as he invariably did, and always with an indulgent accent which forgave while it accused.

The Signorina Americana ! — how many times was she not levelled at the ears of the Signore Americano who had inherited her tradition with the villa of which he was the next lessee. If the contadini were to be believed, there was little for which she might not be held accountable. They

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spoke of her smilingly, Oreste tenderly, the priest indulgently (the Signorina also had possessed a generous taste in wines), and Gioja not at all. Yet apparently it was precisely Gioja who might have had most to say.

“Ah, yes; if I could have foreseen when I brought that child to her! But what harm could come to her from earning a few francs as the Signorina’s maid? I chose her for the very reason that she had more gentleness and was more educated than the others, — the Signorina, your countrywoman, was herself very educated and full of *gentilezza*. But she was too good to Gioja, and then she could never be made to see. She had a way with her, — when I began to remonstrate with her she would fill up my glass and ask about my poor, and, before I knew it — *altro!* she was very generous, your countrywoman. But if there are many like her in your country it must be a terrible place; a man would not possess his own soul.”

The Signore laughed.

“She would sit here — precisely where I sit now — and smile a little smile she had, and twist this rose-vine about her fingers, and just so she

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twisted us all. Ah," he concluded, lifting his glass, "she was truly terrible, that Signorina ; but *simpatica, altro!* never have I seen so *simpatica* a signorina."

Simpatica! When you are that, there is nothing else you can be ; and when you are not that, nothing that you can be is of any use. When everybody, down to the newsboys and cab-openers, loves you and does n't know why, — you are *simpatica* ; when people would rather do things for you than not, and don't care about the payment, — then you may be sure you are *simpatica* ; when the expression of their eyes and the tones of their voices change insensibly when they look at and speak to you, — there is no room to doubt that you are *simpatica*. You may not be rich, nor beautiful, nor "educated" (such a very different thing from book-fed), but you do not need to be. *Simpatica* is the comprehending sky of praise in which separate stars of admiration are swallowed up.

While the Signore figured rapidly the mischief possible of accomplishment by a dangerous Signorina possessing this attribute, the priest drank another glass of wine and returned to the trouble of his soul.

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“I thought, indeed, with a wife’s work to do, she would settle down like others; but Oreste encourages her wilfulness.”

“Why do you not speak to Gioja herself?”

“Heaven forbid!” exclaimed the priest, crossing himself. “I have tried that once. She has a terrible nature, — that child! I have never told any one; but see if I have not reason to say so, Signore.” He sipped his wine agitatedly, and then began with feeling: —

“It was the Signorina to begin with; she saw that the child was pretty, and she put ideas in her head. And in fact, though Heaven forbid I should compare Gioja, who is only a little *contadina*, with a real Signorina, yet she has always seemed to me to have a little something about her which recalls the Signorina herself, — a way of walking and carrying her head. And the Signorina had not an idea of keeping her in her place. She was always giving her gowns and ribbons and trinkets and vanities of all kinds, — that was her way, always giving. The end of it was that one day I surprised that child with a hat of the Signorina’s on her unhappy head; yes, actually, Signore, if you will credit me,

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a hat, — a *cappello di signora* on her head ! ” He spread his hands in deprecating despair.

The Signore looked blankly.

“ Oh, Signore, you are like your countrywoman ; it is impossible to make you understand ! But it must be a country, — yours ! For a girl like Gioja to put a hat on is to declare herself without shame at once. Honest girls of her class let such *roba di signore* alone ; yes, and rightly, for God has put people in their places. A girl who showed herself in a signora's hat would find it impossible to live in Vignola ; she would be hooted out of the village. And as for the wife of a lad like Oreste pretending to that, — half-a-dozen lovers would not be a worse scandal. Those at least the others could understand, but a *cappello di signora* — ” He stopped to take several agitated sips, shaking his head all the time. “ I do not say she would have been so mad as to cross the threshold in it (the Signorina had given it to her to sell for the feathers upon it) ; but who could tell what such a girl might do ? I scolded her well for her wicked vanity, and such ideas above her place. Santa Maria ! — lovers and such are enough, without a scandal like that among my people.

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Well, what was the end? Signore, she rushed off and hung that hat, with at least twenty francs' worth of good feathers on it, in the Madonna's chapel, beside 'Maso's crutch and the little hearts and legs and other offerings to Our Lady! There it hung, where all the world would see it, and every tongue in the place be set wagging, if I had not providentially gone in and found it before Mass next day. And even then what could I do? It was the Madonna's, and I dared not remove it. But Heaven sends accidents, and as it chanced, *providentially*, Signore, my candle brushed the feathers in passing and, *presto*, I dropped it quickly into a bucket of water. It was not fit for Our Lady after that, so I took it away, and I myself made it up to her in candles, that no one might feel hurt. And after all nobody was the richer for all those francs' worth of feathers; they were singed more than I hoped, and did not bring me in Florence the price of the candles. Oh, she has a terrible nature, — that Gioja! No, no, *grazie*, — if I must speak to Oreste, I must; but to her! — candles cost, Signore, and I am a poor man."

Still shaking his head, he rose to depart.

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The Signore, left alone, paced the terrace a few times, smiling to himself; then he sat down again, — this time in the priest's place, — and fell to musing, and as he mused his fingers stole almost furtively to the long rose-tendrils, and twisted them gently, while the smile died abruptly on his lips.

Presently he rang, and Giuseppina came out.

“You may take away these things,” said the Signore, “and bring me pen and paper. Oh, and by the way, Giuseppina, in future put my seat here, — the valley sees itself better.”

Coming from the post that evening the Signore was aware of a slender shape slipping along through the deepening shadows ahead. Quickening his steps, he overtook it easily.

“*Buon sera*; so it is you, Gioja?”

“Si, Signore!” — the voice was both startled and appealing.

But the Signore strode along looking keenly at the downcast face.

“Oreste is not with you?”

“No, Signore; he went to the city.”

“And you have doubtless been visiting your *nonna*?”

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“ Yes, Signore,” — the voice was almost inaudible.

The Signore turned on his heel, with a curt “ *Buona sera!* ” and was still muttering things under his breath when, fifteen minutes later, he beheld from the terrace Oreste and Elisabetta toiling wearily up the hill.

“ How well she times it,” he thought contemptuously, as the bell of the big gate sounded, and he heard Giuseppina’s challenge : “ Who is it ? ”

“ *Amici*, friends,” answered Oreste’s voice, and Oreste swiftly followed, with his frank smile and a square envelope of dull blue, which the Signore’s hand involuntarily stretched to grasp.

“ *Ecco*, Signore, — the only one ! ” said Oreste, with that polite gesture of regret with which he daily accompanied this small comedy. The Signore having possessed himself of the letter avidly, put it into his pocket with ostentatious carelessness and coolly lighted a cigarette. Oreste smiled comprehendingly but respectfully.

“ You have had a long day of it ? ”

“ Yes, Signore,” Oreste smiled with the satisfied air of one who has done a good day’s work.

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"I suppose you have made a handful of money," continued the Signore, severely.

Oreste shrugged his shoulders. "Not great things, — but, *altro*, I am content."

The Signore shrugged in his turn. "Each to his own mind. Your *sposina* has also made a long day; I saw her just now."

"Ah, yes; it is a long way to Vincigliata, when one must walk. The Signore's commands?"

"None."

Truly, the Signorina Americana, if this was her work, had small reason to be proud of it. The Signore's frown enveloped even the blue envelope, at which he stood staring long after Oreste had left the room.

And so it ran through the spring months, — the mournfully beautiful Tuscan spring. The nightingales in the villa gardens sang and sang, at dusk, in the moonlight, and at dawn, and the fireflies glittered all through the darkness up and down the olive slopes. An intenser life quickened in the little community as the summer stirred in the veins of her children. The youths went singing up and down the hills, and the girls and women lingered

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over their water jars at the fountain in the square. For what is it to be poor in the summer time ?

Sometimes the Signore, lying awake at night, heard Oreste's mellow voice as he passed by to the little house. But through all this gayety of being Gioja stole silently and dreamily, and the whisper of turned heads and eyes askance followed her. For there were the ever-recurring *festas*, when Oreste went to the city, and where then did Oreste's *sposa* go ? That is what the community would like to know ; for the tale of her grandmother was quite too large for the village throat. She kept her secret well, — yes ; but there is only one kind of a secret possible to the Italian mind.

“ Birbone ! ” said the women, with contempt of Oreste, while the men laughed and shrugged their shoulders. Oreste had caught a pretty *sposa* who had thought herself much too good for them, but, *ma chè*, — he was paying for it.

It was impossible that the public curiosity should content itself with being curious. Maria, one of those public-minded souls which never lack in any community, toiled all the way over to Vincigliata, and brought back personal assurance from the *nonna*

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herself that that pious granddaughter had not been seen in Vincigliata all these months.

“ Eight good miles I trudged in all that sun, and a day's work lost,” declared Maria, mopping her brow in the midst of an excited and sympathetic group. “ *If* my legs ache ! But for the good of the community I did it ; and what I know to-night the priest shall know before morning. I made haste to go to-day, for to-morrow, being the *festa* of our Saint John, Oreste goes to the city, and that *civetta* — ”

And nobody could say but that Maria had done well, and the girl deserved whatever might come of it.

But when the priest, sad-eyed and stern, knocked at the door of the little house in the early morning after Mass, no one was there. Having delivered a vain fusillade, to the accompaniment of many suggestions offered from the neighbors' windows, the priest turned away and betook himself, with a clouded brow, to the Signore, who had invited him, by Oreste, to breakfast with him that morning. He was waiting for him now on the terrace with a morning countenance ; and the breakfast-table, heaped

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with roses, wore a festal air which did not escape the priest, preoccupied though he was.

“You also are keeping a feast, Signore, to appearances?”

“Yes.”

“Ah, indeed! a *festa Americana*?”

“No, my own. And now what is it about these two? Oreste, I know, went to the city. I tried to engage him, but he was pre-engaged to that patron of his. And Gioja, — well, I saw her pass a little later.”

“While we were in the church, — the guilty child!” said the priest, sternly. “But where can she have gone?” he added, sighing. “I have been much to blame; I have been too negligent; I should have dealt with her from the first. *Culpa mia!*” He crossed himself and looked so discouraged that the Signore was touched.

“Listen, *amico mio*,” he said. “As you say, it is a bad business; and, arrange it how you will, it will never be well that those two shall live here. The last of it will never be heard, — if I know your people. I am going away to Livorno next week, and I have asked Oreste to go with me. I like the

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fellow, and away from here she may come to her senses. She is young, and, guilty though she may be, she does not seem case-hardened."

"Going away!" exclaimed the startled priest, in dismay. "And going to take those two away from their own country,—to a foreign place! What an idea,—but what an idea!"

"Scarcely foreign; it is only the other side of Florence."

"Ah, ah! to you, but to us villagers! It is not a little thing to leave one's home, where one has been born and bred, and knows his neighbors, after all, whether they be good or bad. It is a great thing to know one's neighbors. And to go so far!—but they will think twice before they say 'Yes.'"

"On the contrary, Oreste goes willingly. I do not think he is so blind; he knows well they are not friendly to his *sposa* here."

"And Gioja," said the startled priest, "will she go?"

"He says so."

The priest drew a long breath, half relief, half regret, and wholly wonder.

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“Well, well, it is perhaps the best that could happen. But to lose two of my flock — and to leave one’s country like that! You are a strange people, you Americans. And what becomes of us without either you or the Signorina Americana here in the villa?”

“There are more Americans,” replied the Signore, smiling; “and who knows but that your Signorina will return to make you more trouble yet?”

The priest shook his head. “The next time she may bring her own maid. Not another girl from our village shall she turn the head of, that Signorina,” and the very tone of his voice as he said it was witness that he affirmed what he knew to be false. The Signore understood and laughed.

“Put it all away, *amico mio*, for to-day, and go with me to Florence. Gioja has gone; and you can do nothing but listen to your people, who will deafen you before night. Come and see your *bella Firenze* in her *festa* dress. We will take a tram below and find a cab at the gates.”

The priest’s face brightened like a child’s.

“Ah, Signore, now it is I you are proposing to

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carry away ! But why not ? It is long since I was in Florence, and I have already said service here. But it is not necessary to say anything to my people. Discretion, Signore, discretion is a great thing ! ”

And thus it happened that when the village folk saw the good father depart in company with the Signore *forestiere*, they sagely concluded, with that sense of the importance of our own affairs common to the race, that the two had gone to Fiesole, or who knew but even Florence, to consult the authorities in the matter of that unhappy Gioja. And, in point of fact, though the priest was fairly running away from the subject, he was destined to run straight into its arms instead.

Florence was all in *festa* ; and if there is anything lovelier than Florence in *festa*, who has seen it ? The streets ran over with bright sunshine ; and the Florentines, reinforced by *contadini* from all the neighboring towns, in holiday garb, made a bright, shifting mass for the sunbeams to play over. Arno rolled its now shallow stream like muddy gold, and pale golden palaces stood loftily up and looked down at her. Over her streaming Ways, Florence shook the bells in all her towers every fifteen minutes,

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and at intervals the deep, golden-throated voice in Giotto's Tower answered with a rich hum, hum-m, hum-m-m, like a melodious summer bee. The strident notes of the *grilli*, in their little wicker cages, brought from the Cascine at dawn, completed the joyous pandemonium.

The Signore's spirits ran at higher tide than even the bright tide of humanity about him. He laughed at all; he bought flowers of the boys and girls who ran after the carriage holding up glowing armfuls, until the carriage-seat was heaped, and the priest held up his hands at the extravagance. He climaxed his folly by buying all the remaining *grilli* in their cages, and letting them loose upon the grass of the Cascine.

"Do not scold, *amico mio*," he said to the priest gayly; "I told you it is a *festa*. I have come into a fortune, and it is written that nobody must be shut up to-day or hungry." He tossed a handful of soldi to a group of children.

"I am afraid your fortune will not last long," replied the priest, shaking his head.

But he forgot his own prudence when, a little later, they went to a restaurant, — not Doney's,

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where the foolish tourists go, fancying themselves in Italy, and where the priest would have been miserable, — but Gilli's on the Piazza Signoria. There, it being a feast day, and his host newly come into a fortune, the good father ate, for the honor of religion and his own temporal good, such a meal as had never before found its way to his stomach, and washed it down with glasses of Chianti, not merely old (*vecchio*), but extravagantly old (*stravecchio*). Golden moments were these, and he put down his glass at last with a sigh of regret that it was impossible to prolong them further. His limit of possibility was reached.

“Now,” said the Signore, casting an extravagant fee upon the table, “where next?”

“To the Baptistery and the Duomo, my son,” answered the priest, with sudden gravity, crossing himself, “to say our *grazie*, and put up a little prayer to our good Saint John.”

It was precisely upon emerging from the door of Gilli's in this comfortable and untroubled frame of mind, arising from the perfect balance of the carnal and the spiritual, that he came face to face with the worst trouble of all. For, straightening his shabby

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hat and smoothing his shabby cassock, what should his eyes fall upon but Oreste, — Oreste, who, having that moment emerged from a café below, was assisting a very elegant signora into his cab. Just as he got her safely tucked in, his eye caught the two pairs staring at him. His sturdy face blanched; then, before either could make step forward, he had shut the door, sprung quickly to the seat, and, touching up Elisabetta, with a glance of defiance whirled away. The two left, staring, drew a long breath.

“*Ebbene*,” remarked the Signore, at last, “so the patron was a *padrona*; perhaps Gioja has not been so much to blame after all.”

“I will know,” answered the priest, sharply.

The Signore said a word to the nearest cabman, slipping something into his hand, and in a moment they were bowling up the Via Calzaioli. It cost a city cabman nothing to keep Elisabetta in sight; and they drew up in the Piazza del Duomo just in time to see Oreste deferentially assisting his Signora to alight at the Cathedral steps. He saw them and his eyes shot such a glance of stern warning that both men sat stupidly, and the next moment nearly fell over each other as the Signora, in her silks

Oreste's Patron

and nodding plumes, swept by, — for, lo, it was Gioja !

In another instant she had swept up the steps and the great doors had swallowed her. Then Oreste's manner changed. He leaned against the cab-door, and turned upon the two men a regard which said : “ And now what have you to say about it ? ”

There was a decidedly awkward silence while they drew near ; then the Signore burst out laughing.

“ You have found a fine patron, *amico mio* ! ” he said.

“ What folly ! ” ejaculated the priest, holding up his hands and recovering breath at last. “ *Gran Dio*, what folly ! ”

“ Reverendo,” replied Oreste, quietly, “ perhaps not so much folly as some of you have thought. Perhaps I know what the tongues up there wag like, and if I choose not to mind, whose affair is that ? If it pleases us to please ourselves, who is the worse for that ? ”

“ And the scandal ! ” exclaimed the priest. “ And the waste, and the ideas you are putting in Gioja's head, — the wicked vanity and pride — Oh, I told the Signorina how it would end ! ”

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“As for that, Reverendo, you will pardon me ; but tongues must wag when they are hung in the middle, and if they wag about Gioja, — why it does n’t hurt her, and some one else goes safe. And as for the waste, — the price of a fare now and then, — why if it suits us to live on polenta six days, and take our pleasure on the seventh, whose misery is that ? I have never yet lacked my soldo for the Church or for a neighbor poorer than I.”

“And the ideas you are encouraging in her unhappy head ! — but I will have something to say to that child.”

“Reverendo,” interposed Oreste, sternly, “by your leave, — you are a good man, half a saint, and I am only an ignorant peasant, but there are some things priests and nuns do not understand, and what one does not understand, that one should not meddle with. The Signorina understood ; she knew well it was neither pride nor vanity in Gioja, but just a kind of *poesia* which made her like to play the signora. The Signorina understood because she herself was full of *poesia*.”

“Oh, the Signorina, — the Signorina !” interjected the priest, in despair.

Oreste's Patron

"She *knew*," Oreste went on. "You remember the time of the hat, Reverendo?"

"If I remember!" groaned the priest.

"*Ebbene!*" said Oreste, emphatically, "when I found it out, I went straight to the Signorina and told her. She was on the terrace, and she sat down and laughed a little. You remember our Signorina's way of laughing?"

It was to the priest that he addressed this; but it was the Signore, looking straight before him and smiling, who looked as if he remembered.

"Nothing would do," continued Oreste, "but that she must jump into my cab then and there, with only a lace on her head, and she a Signorina! [here the Signore laughed aloud]—and drive straight to Florence, not to one of the small shops, but to the great milliner's on Tornabuoni, where she bought a hat,—who knows what it cost?—and she bade me take it to Gioja and tell her to wear it when she liked, for there was nothing wicked about it."

The priest groaned again.

"Only," added Oreste, with the suspicion of a twinkle, "she bade us say nothing about it, lest you, Reverendo, might think it your duty to lecture the

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child again ; and it was a pity, she said, to make so good a man uncomfortable. So, as she could not wear it openly, we had to find a way under the plate ; and as the whole village would have been talking if we went away together, I had to make that little story of a patron. Once outside of Vignola, I wait for Gioja, and there in the olive grove she makes herself into a signora ; and on the way home we stop again, and — the signora's hat and gown stowed away under my seat — my little *sposa* climbs up beside me and we talk it all over. And then the next day I count my francs, and the folk call me '*Birbone* ;' and the lads think evil of my Gioja because she would never look at them ; and we laugh in our sleeves. What does all that matter when one is happy ? ”

“ And so,” said the priest, sternly, “ you let all Vignola think your wife has a lover, and say nothing ? ”

“ They have to think something ; and is n't it better they should think she has a lover, Reverendo, than a *cappello di signora* ? ”

“ Surely,” assented the priest, quickly ; “ a lover, at least, they can all understand ; and only too many

Oreste's Patron

of them — Madonna pardon them! — have had ; but a signora's hat nobody in the village has ever had, and they would never pardon Gioja for having. And they have right ; Gioja has no business with a signora's hat, nor you to waste your time and money, as if you would be *bambini* all your lives. And for you, a man, to make yourself the servant of your wife, — oh, it is shameful, *vergognoso!*”

“Pardon again, Reverendo, but that, too, you can't understand. If it is Gioja's *poesia* to play the signora, — why, Gioja is *my poesia*. As for its lasting, *altro!* the future is long ; and if we had others to feed all that might be different. She is only a child herself now ; but when the good God sends a child to a child, that makes a woman of her ; He himself sees to that. When that comes, she will care nothing to play the signora with her stupid Oreste. All this our Signorina knew ; for that night, when the child came to me weeping, and saying how wicked she had been, and begging me to forgive her and marry her at once, *at once* — I, Signori, who would have married her any moment for years ! — it put me in trouble. I had fear to take her like that, and perhaps have her sorry for it later. But I went to

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our Signorina with her, and told her all ; and she looked at us both and said : ‘ Marry her, Oreste ; you safely may ; ’ for the Signorina understood. And so — I married her.”

The eyes of the two young men met suddenly, and exchanged across the gulf of position and race one rapid thrill of comprehension. The priest looked half-timidly at both ; but perhaps he, too, comprehended something, for he said meekly, —

“ After all, I did no harm.”

“ Perhaps not,” replied Oreste, with his frank smile ; “ but that was not your fault, Reverendo. And now, if the Signore and you will excuse me, that was the bell of the Elevation. If Gioja saw you, she would have no more pleasure ; and that would be all the more a pity, because it is our last *festa* here. We are going to live with the Signore and his Signora. Isn’t it so, Signore ? ”

“ Ah, ah ! ” exclaimed the priest, with vivacity, “ so that was your *festa* and your fortune, Signore ? And that is why you have so much sympathy for even the *grilli* and these foolish children ! Well, well, it is perhaps the best that could happen ; for it would be impossible to go on giving scandal like

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this, and if I said a word you would all be for taking my life. It may do for Gioja, who is not like the others; but Heaven forbid the other *ragazze* should get such ideas in their heads; I have enough to do to keep track of them and their affairs as it is."

"Signori!" said Oreste, warningly. The two slunk behind the next cab, and from there beheld the stream of life suddenly burst from the big doors of the Duomo, — men and women and children, prince and citizen and peasant, and among them a slender, graceful shape, her *cappello di signora* sitting well upon the ruffled gold of her hair, and her long skirt raised in one gloved hand with a gesture at which the Signore's heart beat suddenly faster against the blue envelope above it. So very excellent an imitation of the Signora that even an expert need not blush to be deceived by it.

Oreste stepped forward and flung open the cab-door with ostentation. The Signora mounted languidly, and sank back against the cushions, making a great rustling of silk. The loungers on the Duomo steps stole covert glances at the pretty woman. Then Oreste slammed the door, took off his hat, and approached deferentially.

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“*Commanda, Signora?*” he said, loud enough for everybody to hear.

“*Alla casa*, — home,” responded the Signora, with superb languor.

And, mounting upon the seat, with a parting glance of mingled triumph and humor in the direction of the two watchers, Oreste, Elisabetta, and the Signora whirled triumphantly away.

The two left upon the sidewalk remained speechless for a few minutes; then the priest’s eye caught his companion’s, deprecatingly, but with an echo of Oreste’s twinkle.

“That Signorina,” he said, with an indulgent sigh, “she has much to answer for!”

But the Signore, looking into the distance and laughing softly to himself, said not a word.

The Appeal to Anne
By
Edward Cummings

THE APPEAL TO ANNE

I

FROM ROGER

YOU are my friend. Therefore I am sure of your patience. My dearest, yield it to me now, of all times! This is a confession and prayer.

True, I might dissemble still. Chance lends the ready garment.

But I am resolved I will have no more lies. I will speak the truth, though I lose you. I never knew much good to come of lies.

Dear, if you love me much, this will pain you bitterly. I should be glad to die now, if so I rightly might, that you might think of me always as you do now, and *she* might never know, or be wounded in her faith and pride.

For me has been destined the doing of that wrong I look upon as the deadliest of all. Treachery is the crime, and the crime is mine.

The Appeal to Anne

Let me tell you again, you tender woman, you dearest and noblest in the world, how I love you. I think of you constantly, I yearn for your sweet companionship. You are my dear ideal, — you are to me all peacefulness and worth and wisdom and womanly greatness and incomparable grace. You are the pure air to me.

Dear, it is because my love for you is the best that is in me that I am at such pains to make my confession absolute. My heart grows imperious at thought of you, and leaps for the highest course, though that bids for the supernal sacrifice of losing you — you, so sweetly gained! For you I should be happy to die now, heart in hand.

It would be sweet, I think, to die now, to leave this black dilemma, to vanish utterly. And yet, while you live, all splendor and all graces are here!

. . . Dear Anne, there is another woman I have been making love to — how I loathe to write the name — Doris Ewing, who loves me as I love you, and to whom I grew tender just in hopelessness of you.

So far away in the North you were, so like the figment of a fond impossible ideal, and she was here

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beside me, dark-eyed and sweet. I loved her. So often I said it — so sweetly she believed, and the habit grew. “I love you,” I said, even when I knew that love was just like. For often she was but as a small craft on the heaving sea of my passion, the sea that ran to its flood-tide for you!

I told her repeatedly I loved her — and lied. Was it any the less a lie that the spirit of romance was strong within me, and my heart-hunger made me mad? I loved her in this fashion, say, because she was loving, and my heart was full of love.

It did not come to me forcibly at the time that I was lying. I had come into the habit of her, and the words did not stick in my throat, as lies usually do. I did not despise myself. My duplicity I learned to contemplate with equanimity and to forget, and so I lied ardently and successfully. What a bad success it was!

For Doris loved me dearly, and cried over me a bit, now and then, I suspect, and was beautiful and happy. I wondered, sometimes (forgetting the reason that lay in my larger desire — you!), why I did not really love her.

Such is my story, as well as I understand it.

The Appeal to Anne

She is very sweet, and I am very fond of her. I seek to extenuate nothing ; I write the crude facts as I know them. She has black hair and eyes ; she is very white and slender, with nestling ways. She is not very learned or rich, but patrician and proud ; all agree that she is beautiful. She is debonair and sweet, and when I think of you she is nothing to me — nothing !

But I tried to love her just in love's despite ; and she was happy in the main, and I was half-resigned. I stifle when I think of that.

How pitiful it all was !

Often she leaned, touched my shoulder, and spoke with downcast eyes : —

“ Do you really love me ? ”

“ Very tenderly. ”

“ Passionately ? ”

“ Passionately. ”

“ With all your heart ? ”

“ With all my heart. ”

“ Forever ? ”

“ Forever. ”

She mistrusted me no more than the day mistrusts the sun.

By Edward Cummings

And one night I sat late in my room, thinking. It was cold; the wild wind arose, hissing in the stark trees. Out in the cold sky the stars shone white and multitudinous. There came to me a wanton mood; I floated with it, pensive and relaxed. I had no wish to change it, but desired only to sit peacefully through the midnight until sleep should come, to lightly conjecture and mildly reflect, to clasp my knees by the fire and await the fortunes of the hour. Life had grown trivial.

And by degrees the thoughts of you came intensely and possessed me. That was the night I wrote you that mad long letter of adoration and despair.

Ah, you were to me impossible! I had been half-resigned. But that night passion reigned. It was my dearest tribute just to tell you of the love I had for you. If it was madness, it was a sweet madness.

I thought when your letter would come I would sit for a while with it in my hand, and dream the sweet, the terrible, the improbable, — before I opened it to read your kind wording (I knew it would be kind) of what my despair taught me to expect.

Then the wires shot stupefying joy.

The Appeal to Anne

“ Everything ! Why did you wait so long ? Come to me now — at once ! I give you all ! ”

I had the message there at the street. I gazed blankly. Then with realization came tumultuous sweetness that was pain. Doris, across the way, stopped singing.

“ Good news, Roger ? ”

“ The best, and the worst ! ”

“ Oh ! Tell me about it, when I come. ”

. . . Do your eyebrows slope, and your lips upcurl ?

I have written it all out. When she comes (she is coming soon) I shall tell her all, as I have told you. This is to be the blackest hour of my life. I have made up my mind to tell her the truth. It is her right. But my heart has so often failed me. If this is tenderness, why what a false tenderness it is !

I have no more hopes of you now than I had when I wrote you. But I belong to you, and will always belong to you, just for your once loving, even though you despise me, now and forever.

I shall tell her frankly, extenuating nothing. *For I will have no more lies.* On that I am resolved.

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Anne, I do not truly live without you, and I crave the intensest living. I think of you always as I saw you first — tall and fair, with the gold across your temples, and the museful, wistful mouth with its serious thinking silences and then its soft rapid speech, and the eyes, the blue eyes, that had for me such exquisite language. You are repose — Heaven ! And I am in a hell of my own making, and, dearest, I could not help it ! Ah, I am pleading ! I did not mean to plead.

Did you have a dream of me, as noble, say ? Here am I, who love life because of you, who love you more than that life or my hope of heaven. But what to you is such a love ?

She is coming soon, and I shall tell her. I say I shall have no more deception. I am yours — yours ! I dare not write the prayer that is in my heart. I cannot say farewell. Remember, when you despise me worst, I am yours !

II

FROM DORIS

The letter sent with this was found sealed and bearing your name and address in the room where

The Appeal to Anne

Roger died yesterday. He had spoken of you so often that I came almost to know you. That is why I am writing this note ; you were his friend, and one so noble as he must have noble friends. I thought for a moment I would ask you to let me read the letter ; but I could not bear to see it and know that it was his last, and written to another. — The trouble was his heart. Will you be present ? I cannot write any more for crying.

III

THE TWO WOMEN

Said Doris : “ You are just as I pictured you. May I call you just Anne ? How long they prayed ! I did not know you would come. I could not think who you were, standing beside his grave so beautiful and tearless. I could not see well for weeping, and the wind was cold, and my head ached. Oh, the wan face ! The black clothes — I did not like the black. I wanted to lie down there with him and be covered up. The clay was so cold and wet. Oh, how cold my heart grew ! Did you think they prayed long ? I was so cold ! ”

By Edward Cummings

"I have never been told how he died," said Anne.

"I entered the library, where he was waiting for me," Doris replied. "It was near twilight. He sat by the window, looking out. When I came in he turned and his face was pale. The room was cold. The fire had gone out. I never saw him pale before; I was frightened and cried out. He came to re-assure me, and his face was so pale! He looked at me long and anxiously — so anxiously. I did not understand this look, it was so strange. It hurt me because I did not understand it. Now I know it was physical suffering. He went back to the window and sank into his chair. 'Are you not ill?' I asked. He answered, 'A little,' and added, 'It will pass.' But he did not speak at all or touch me, and when I stroked his forehead he leaned suddenly forward, his face in his arms, on the window-sill, and would not answer me. I ran out to tell them he was ill. When the doctor came I was told he was dead. They gave me his letter to send you, and tell you."

"You do not wish," said Anne, "to read the letter?"

Doris did not reply.

The Appeal to Anne

“It would make you less able to realize that he is — gone,” said Anne, gently.

“Yes,” said Doris, “and then it was to you, — not me.”

The other’s face was suffused with tender pity. She spoke impulsively, and yet with a timorous boldness, as one who ventures upon hazardous and novel ways : —

“Doris, he loved you with all his heart ! ”

“He told you ? ”

“Yes.”

“He spoke of you so often, Anne. We shall always be friends.”

“Yes, always.”

“You are sure he loved me so ? ” The girl’s mouth tremored at the corners. “He did not tell me often enough.”

“He loved you dearly,” said Anne.

“Ah, if you knew what sweet comfort you give ! You are sure ? — quite sure ? ”

“He loved you with all his heart,” repeated Anne.

“I will go, Anne. I thank you so much ! I think I can weep again, now. For a while, good-bye. Give me both your hands, and kiss me.”

The Dead Oak

By

Anna Vernon Dorsey

THE DEAD OAK

THE November day was drawing to a close. The shadows were deepening in the pine forest that lay on one side of the sandy road. On the other side, the corn-stalks stood in level rows against the yellow of the sunset. My horse limped painfully, for he had cast a shoe several hours since, and my hurried ride through a thinly inhabited part of lower Maryland, with which I was unfamiliar, had so far brought me near no blacksmith's shop. Great, then, was my relief, on passing the wood, to find a three-cross-roads, and a small house with a shed from which rang the measured stroke of the anvil, while the square of the door was ruddy with the forge fire.

After calling loudly and waiting in vain for a reply, I dismounted. Just then the blacksmith came to the door, — a big, low-browed, long-haired fellow, of few words. After examining my horse's feet, he announced that it would be necessary to replace not only the missing shoe, but also three others.

The Dead Oak

As he proceeded slowly to work, I saw that there was before me the prospect of a long wait which did not promise to be agreeable, for the man was either surly or stupid, and gave out monosyllabic replies in answer to my questions about the country. A dreary country it was, that through which I was passing, — flat, sandy, impoverished, the virtue having been tilled out of the soil for two hundred years. Now that the old landed proprietors had departed to the cities, the majority of the inhabitants were miserable poor whites and negroes, principally fishermen and oystermen. Here and there one came across a relic of the past, — an old manor-house, ruined or deserted, the property generally of one man, a former overseer, who seemed to own most of the country.

And yet there was a charm of the past over this low-lying land, — a blaze of glory in the west, reflected in the broad river that almost lapped the roots of the huge pine forests that grew along its banks.

As I stood at the door of the smithy, looking eastward, I could see only one exception to this sombre monotony of pines. On the roadside, in the middle of a dense sweep of meadows, entirely isolated, stood

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a huge oak-tree, the only one of its kind to be seen for miles around.

“That must be a pretty old tree,” I remarked.

“The Dead Oak? Many a hundred years old, I reckon.”

“It does n’t look dead to me,” I answered; “it has a dense foliage.”

“That’s what they call it, — the Dead Oak. A man hung himself to it three years ago,” said the smith, with some show of animation.

“One of the neighborhood?”

“No; a stranger round here. Nobody ever could find out where he come from, — Washington likely. The niggers say it’s ha’nted.”

“How is that?” I asked, much interested.

“Don’t know; just ha’nted,” said the man gruffly, relapsing into silence amid a fire of sparks.

Leaving my taciturn companion, I sauntered down to the road, my steps turning intuitively in the direction of the old tree.

A chill wind came from the river, and a flight of crows with harsh cries arose from its branches, as it stood, the central landmark in the stretch of meadows. On one side of the road was a zigzag rail

The Dead Oak

fence, and on the topmost rail of this, under the tree, I seated myself. The lowest branches almost touched my head, and the dry and dense foliage rustled with every breeze.

Just beyond were two wooden posts, the entrance of a carriage-way leading through a corn-field to what I had not noticed before, a large house far back from the road. As I sat there, facing the afterglow of the sunset, I became aware of the figure of an old negro coming slowly through the corn-rows, through the gate,—a bent negro with bushy white hair. Taking off his rabbit-skin cap, with a courtly bow he seated himself on the roots of the tree.

For some moments we sat there in silence, the old man, with his hands folded, gazing into the west.

“Good evening, uncle,” I ventured to remark. “Do you live near here?”

“Not far away,—up dat a-way,” waving his hand indefinitely in the direction of the shadowy mansion.

“Have you lived here long?” I asked.

“Many an’ many a year,” he responded wearily. “Ebber sence I cum inter de world. I belonged to Mars’ Brooke up yonder.”

By Anna Vernon Dorsey

“Then you must know about the man who hung himself here three years ago?”

“He war n’t no man,” said the old darky sternly. “He wuz first quality, my young gen’leman. I ought ter know, kase I buried him bofe times.”

At these words, suddenly a thrill ran over me, a sense of mystery, something accursed brooding over this desolate spot.

“What do you mean?” I demanded. “Who was he?”

“Befo’ de Lord, boss, I don’ know, an’ nobody else does. It came about dis ’er’ way: De first time wuz years an’ years ago. Dar wuz good times in de country den. De quality had n’t all gone away an’ sol’ de ole places to oberseers an’ po’ white trash. Mars’ Harry Brooke wuz keepin’ bachelor’s hall up dar, an’ many’s de high ol’ times and junketings dey had. Well, one night dey had a gran’ time, a-drinkin’ an’ a-carryin’ on, he an’ de udder young gemlemens. ’Bout day de party bruk up, kase de wuz sober enuff den ter ride home. I wuz a young chap den, an’ I wuz runnin’ on in front ter open de gate, bar’footed, from de door, kase it war hot weather den, like Injum summer. When I open’

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de gate I scrich out 'O Gord!' an' I like ter fall ter de groun', kase dar, wid his face all white an' orful 'gainst de red leaves, a-lookin' me right in de eyes, wuz a man tied to der branch, wid a white han'chif aroun' his neck. It did n't take me long ter jump fo'ward an' take him down, an' when de gemlemen rid up dar he wuz a-lyin' on de groun' an' me a-settin' right hyar on dis same stump wid his curly head on my knees. He war n't quite dead an' his han' kotch mine, an' his beautiful brown eyes closed a minute, an' he gasped like an' died. All de gemlemen dat came up an' stan' 'roun', dey say dey nebber see any one so handsom' ez my young man wuz, jes like one er de marble statues in de parlor, wid a eagle nose, an' a mouth many a young lady must 'a' kissed. But dose days wuz ober fur him fur ebber, — yes, mon.

“De quarest thing wuz, he did n't hab nuthin' on but a shirt, an' dat wuz de fines' quality, real linin, embroidered, but no mark or sign on it ter tell whar he cum from. Nobody ain't nebber seed him befo' in dis part ob de kentry. Mars' Harry sont all ober the kentry, clar up ter Washin'ton an' Baltimor', but nobody cum fo'ward ter claim him, so he wuz

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buried. De parson say he can't be buried in de cons'crated groun', kus he mus' 'a' kill hisself, so me an' anudder man buried him in de medder, under dis tree, right nigh whar you is a-settin'."

The old man's narrative ran on monotonously. It seemed as natural, as much a part of the scene, as the croaking of the frogs in the deepening twilight, in which it seemed that I could almost see that white face with its aquiline nose and large brown eyes.

"Dat wuz long ago, long ago," the old man resumed, "long ago. De War come an' went, an' Mars' Harry wuz killed, an' de firs' people lef' de kentry and de kentry wuz like new-made sod, dirt up'ards; but I nebber fo'got my young gemleman, real quality, hangin' hyar in dis tree, away from all his people. Well, boss, many years parse, an' Mars' Harry's oberseer done bought de ole place up dar. One night 'bout three years ago dey gib one er dese hyar big abricultural suppers, an' dey set dare all night eatin' an' drinkin' like dere betters used ter do. It wuz de same time er year, but misty an' damp an' in de early mornin' I wuz comin' long de road an' I see a crowd gaddered aroun' de

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tree, jus' like it wuz dat udder mornin' long time ago. When I come up, boss, for Gord! dar wuz my young, beautiful gemleman a-lyin' on de groun', stiff an' stark, in his shirt, wid dat hankerchief 'roun' his neck. I wuz glad ter see him ag'in, but he war n't nearly alive, like he wuz befo'. De doctor wuz dere, an' he felt him an' he say, 'Dis man bin dead fo' days. Who has hang dis corpse to dis tree? Who is de man?' Jes' like dey say befo', 'Who is de man?' Nobody remember' him 'cept'n' me. De ole crowd dat wuz dere befor', de quality, dey all parsed 'way, what wid de War an' one thing ur nudder, all gone but me. But I nebber said nuthin' ter be called ole crazy nigger, — no, mon. Dare he wuz, shore 'nuff, de same eagle nose an' brown eyes an' curls, de same leetle scratch, like de razor done scratch him on de chin. I knowed him, an' I cyarried him; none er dem common folks ain't tetched him. Dey abertised eberywhar, but nobody ain't answer. 'Case dey can't. Dey war n't nobody lef' ter answer 'cept me,' and the old man gave an eerie chuckle. "De doctors an' de lawyers talk it all ober, but dey cayn't agree, an' de parson, one er dese hyar new kind, he say he

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kin be buried in de churchyard, but de people make a fuss, kase he mought er bin a su'cide. So I helped bury him ag'in. Seems like I wuz specially 'pinted ter be his body-sarvant ; dis time it's right outside de churchyard, an' nobody don't know it's him but me, kase dey all passed away."

A pale, watery moon had emerged, the wind soughed among the pine-trees, and away off an owl hooted.

"De nex' time I's gwine to bury him right in de churchyard. He gwine ter come once mo', an' I ain't gwine ter die till den, an' dat time he's gwine ter be buried in de churchyard, and he won't come no mo', an' den I'll pass away."

A shout came through the dusk from the smithy :

"Say, mister, come ; here's your horse." The other words were indistinguishable. I arose and started up the road reluctantly, longing to know more of the mystery. The old man again removed his cap, and so I left him, motionless, seated in the shadows, facing the faint glow in the west. My horse was ready when I reached the forge, the blacksmith standing dark and massive in the doorway.

"An old negro has just been telling me a remark-

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able story," I said after mounting; "that there have been two suicides found hanging to the old oak, one long ago."

"Can't say," answered the blacksmith, impassively and stolidly. "Ain't lived here very long myself. Always been called the 'Dead Oak' ever since I knowed it."

"Well, do you know an old negro with a bushy white head and beard, who lives near the Brooke House? Who is he?"

"Might be old Sam, or Lige, or Cash. Lots of 'em round here," answered the man, and that was all he would say.

I mounted and rode off rapidly, for there were still six hours of travel before reaching my destination.

The moonlight was faint and chill, silvering the dry foliage of the old tree. I drew rein under it, and peered vainly into the shadows for the darker outlines of the old negro; he had disappeared, but it seemed to me he was still present, sitting on the gnarled root, with the pallid face of that young old corpse against his knee, waiting.

The owl hooted. A faint light shone from the dim mansion in the fields, and I pressed on through

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a belt of low pines. When some distance on my way I turned and looked back. The glow of the smithy was hidden. All the low stretch of land was folded in twilight, and against the pale sky the Dead Oak stood spectral and alone.

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Lescarbot's Ballad

By

William Holloway, Jr.

THE MAKING OF MONSIEUR LESCAR- BOT'S BALLAD

IT was a stormy evening of March, 1611. All day snow had fallen in a white whirlwind on Port Royal, winning one by one its points of vantage, and submerging each in turn relentlessly, till now the tiny colony had almost vanished in the drifts.

Signs of outline there were none. The great stone gateway at the southeast, carved above with the fleur-de-lis, was dim and shapeless even to the sentry in the guard-room beside it; the bastion to the southwest, its four cannon quite buried, melted vaguely into the darkness. Snow lay everywhere. The gabled houses were turned into white misshapen monsters, and strange fantastic mounds stretched across the Square. Even the flag of France in the centre, beneath which the Seigneur of Port Royal stood each year to greet his vassals, had suffered with the rest, the wind having wrapped it tightly about its staff, and the interminable flakes blotted out its lilies.

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It was ten by the clock, and the colonists long since abed, so that, save for the blink of the sentry's candle, a stranger passing by the guard-room would have seen no sign of life. But that was only because a giant drift hid the great hall of the seigneurie from sight, for there a few of them were still awake and drinking deep, in honor of the coming to Acadie of the Duc de Montpelier, cousin of the king.

Within the long wainscoted room, Poutrincourt, Seigneur of Port Royal, sat musing before a huge log fire, with his thin white hands spread out to the mellow heat. His face, delicately contoured and crossed by many lines, gleamed with a ruddy hue while the flames roared up the high-arched chimney; when they sank low again, it had the likeness of an ashen mask against the blackness of his silken doublet. He was clad entirely in black, even to his ruffles. His head was sunken on his breast. And thus he sat gazing at the fire, his shadow on the wall behind keeping time grotesquely to the leaping flames.

To his left Marc Lescarbot, the poet of the colony, listened across a bowl of muscat to one of Imbert's endless stories. He was tall and thin, with dreamy gray eyes; there were girlish dimples on his cheeks.

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Just now, however, his face was flushed and his fingers played nervously about his girdle, for Imbert, after a fashion of his own, was emphasizing the narrative with reckless flourishings of his naked sword. But even then, with the point almost upon his breast, Monsieur Lescarbot by no means lost his urbanity, for his smile, albeit a trifle anxious, was still most wondrous sweet. As for Imbert, the story he was telling had excited him beyond control. It was as if his wild sea-roving days had returned. His black eyes flashed fiercely from out his red, scarred face; his rubicund lips were protruded; his massive left hand was twined in the coarse black hair that overhung his forehead. As the firelight danced athwart him he seemed to Lescarbot, always fanciful, much like the gods on the bowls of the Indian lobster-claw pipes, so broad was his short, squat body and so flaming red his face.

On the right at a small table the Seigneur's son, Biencourt, and the Duc de Montpelier played at dice; the one eagerly, as if mindful of his growing pile of pistoles, the other in listless unconcern. And this difference the appearance of the two enhanced, for while Biencourt was tall, blue-eyed, and smooth

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and fresh of face, the duc was short and dark, with glittering black eyes and a pale, wearied countenance. And whereas Biencourt was bravely dressed in doublet and hose of soft blue satin, the duc wore a black velvet that harmonized sombrely with his paleness and his listlessness. He had but that day reached Acadie from France, yet the sight of the forest life about him, the fur-clad lackeys and strange Indian relics, seemed scarcely to stir his pulses. Instead he sat in silence by the table, carelessly toying with his white, ringed hands.

The round ended and Biencourt swept in his gains. "Doubles?" he cried.

The duc nodded and pushed forward his stake.

"It was then the English came aboard us, Monsieur Lescarbot," roared Imbert, waving his sword, "and I leave you to judge how fierce the fighting was with half our men already dead. The deck was a red shambles, and in the midst stood Pierre Euston, blood from head to heel."

"It is worthy of a ballad," murmured his hearer.

The duc shivered and drew nearer the fire. "Do ballads flourish in this frozen land?" he asked, with a languid lift of his black eyebrows.

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Poutrincourt started from his reverie. "Lescarbot is a famous poet, monsieur le duc. For a ballad or love-song I know few to equal him."

A blush reddened the poet's dimpled cheeks. "The wilderness is full of subjects," said he, modestly.

The wind was rising higher and the stout oaken door rattled clamorously to the white gusts. His highness the Duc de Montpelier shivered again and looked about him somewhat curiously at the quaintly carven doors and the bearskins and heads of deer that hung upon the dark wainscoted walls.

"It was then I came up from the lower deck," went on Imbert, "and side by side Pierre Euston and I charged together. Ah! Pierre was a brave fighter in those days, I warrant you, and together we swept the decks before us. And droll enough work it was, with the wounded dogs of English laying their swords about our heels as we passed."

"It was scoundrelly work," broke in Biencourt, balancing his dice-box on his fingers. "Nothing would please me better than a meeting with this droll gentleman, this Pierre Euston."

Half seriously, half amusedly, the quondam pirate

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shrugged his great shoulders. "Tush! I was but a lad," he said in a tone of apology, "and I took no share beyond the fighting."

The dicing went on. The duc threw and lost again and impassively as ever filled his silver flagon from the pitcher on the long oaken table behind him. "To your next ballad, Monsieur Lescarbot," he said, politely. But the wine was scarce half way to his lips ere there came a strange interruption. The door opened slowly from without, and a woman entered, an infant in her arms.

In after years, when alone with Imbert in the ruined fort, that scene came back to Biencourt with startling vividness. Once again he beheld the long room dyed red in the glow of the fire; once more he saw them as they started to their feet and stood staring blankly at the stranger. And much cause was there to stare, for women in Port Royal this winter there were none, — least of all grand ladies, such as each movement showed this to be, — while beyond the fort lay naught but a savage, unbroken wilderness. And Biencourt remembered standing thus while one might slowly count ten.

The duc was the first to speak. "You are cold,

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madame," he said softly. "You must drink some wine." And, flagon in hand, he approached her.

But the newcomer, who was blue-eyed and most marvellously fair of face, waved him curtly back. "I have come to ask shelter for myself and babe, from the lord of the seigneurie, monsieur, not to drink wine." Then, pausing as if for breath, she stood erect beside the door, slender and lissome, a multitude of snow-flakes slowly melting in the red-gold of her hair.

For a moment Poutrincourt was silent. Idly his thoughts travelled the endless forest wastes of Acadie, snow-clad and inhospitable, where, this winter of 1611, was no white settlement beside his own. He had even passed up the great river to Quebec, where his friend Captain Samuel Champlain had three years before planted the banner of the fleur-de-lis, when with a start he became aware the woman's eyes were fixed haughtily upon him. Then, mindful of his duty, he stepped forward, bowing low, and bade her welcome to his seigneurie of Port Royal, brushing the snow from her long fur mantle with his own white hands. And in an instant more the stranger was ensconced in a chair before the fire.

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Biencourt and the duc resumed their gaming, Monsieur Lescarbot took out his tablets preparatory to verse-making, and Imbert busied himself mulling wine for the conclusion of the evening's potations, which in Port Royal were wont to be of the deepest. But no one ventured to mar the hospitality of Port Royal with a question, and the newcomer proved more taciturn than would have been expected from the laughing curves of her lips, sitting moment after moment silent in the glow of the fire.

The wind still battered at the door and muttered angrily in the chimney, but to Biencourt the room was filled with a new light — a strange radiance that seemed to emanate from the stranger's golden head or the crimson kirtle which she wore. He forgot his game. He watched only her drooping lashes, with a vague hope that soon she might raise them. And as he watched, the pile of money before him lessened rapidly.

"I fear you bring me ill-luck, madame," he cried at last, ruefully smiling toward her. "These pistoles have a sorry trick of vanishing since you came."

The stranger raised her lashes, as he had hoped.

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She smiled back responsively, and her eyes caught an amber light from the leaping flames. "Would you turn me into the night again?" she asked, jestingly, yet with a strange inflection in her voice as though speaking to some one far away.

Biencourt shook his head. "This may bring me fortune," he said, in eager tones. And rising and striding to her side, he stooped down and made the sign of the cross above the baby's forehead — a simple superstition, but evidently not to the newcomer's liking, for she said with some hauteur, "I, monsieur, am of the reformed faith," and leaned back coldly in her chair.

"Methinks, madame, you cannot have journeyed far," broke in Poutrincourt, who had been staring into the fire. "Your cloak had little snow for much travel, and, besides, there was the babe."

Madame's face lost its haughtiness, and she smiled once more.

Poutrincourt rubbed his slender hands softly together. "All about us is the endless forest, and lo! as if by magic you appear! Are you sure there be no witchcraft in it?"

The stranger's laugh rang through the hall, dying

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faintly amid the armor in the far corner. "Mayhap I sailed hither in some sea-rover from the Spanish lands, or perhaps" — and here she smiled demurely — "I hid myself in yonder vessel that this day came from France. Perchance I dared the drifts alone, or I may have bribed some of the red savages to carry me. But where'er I came from, the sentry at the gate is not to blame. The night is dark, and the snow has heaped an easy road from outside over the bastion."

"I am waiting, Monsieur Biencourt," broke in the duc, with an impatient glance at his opponent, who was still standing by the stranger lady's side. There was such anger in his tone that the other men, remembering his former listlessness, glanced curiously at him.

His pale face was even paler than before; tiny drops of moisture glittered on his forehead; one hand was clenched above his winnings, in the other his dice-box trembled. "Does he love his pistoles after all?" thought the poet, pausing in his poem. The wine was mulled at last and the goblets filled. The Seigneur of Port Royal drank slowly and reflectively, in small sips, glancing alternately from the

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fair-haired mother to her dark-eyed, cooing child. "I have thought about your lodging, madame," he said at last, tilting his goblet to and fro.

"Here you would have no rest, else I would give you my own apartments. This evening we are something quieter than usual, but oftener the noise of revelling disturbs the forest far into the night. The hall is full of men in leathern hunting suits, the red savages sit smoking by the fire, there is gaming and wine-drinking, and in the intervals we sing the songs of France. But without the fort, a half-mile beyond the gate, are two disused huts. One of these I give you to inhabit. And that you suffer insult from none, a protector shall go with you, who shall answer for your honor with his own. There be two huts, and each shall have one. But this night you will lodge here."

The stranger leaned forward. Her slender fingers touched his arm. "You have forgotten to name the one who is to guard me," she said hastily, a curious thrill vibrating through her voice.

The Seigneur pointed at Biencourt, and her face, which had seemed strained and eager, relaxed again. "We shall be brave allies, shall we not?" she

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cried, turning her blue eyes toward him. Biencourt laughed. "None better," he responded in great good-humor.

The storm was growing fiercer as the night went on. The door rattled more noisily, and the flames in the great chimney waved to and fro in the sudden gusts. The space on the other side of the table, feebly lit by two candles in brazen candlesticks, became a battleground of shadows from the group before the fire. The stranger lady, seeming not to mind the storm, looked dreamily about her at the strange antlers on the walls, and at the motto of the lords of Port Royal, carved above the oaken mantel, shielding her baby's face the while from the glare of the flames. Presently her eyes met Biencourt's.

"You are brave; is it not so?" she asked, with a laugh and a toss of her head that spread her golden hair in sunshine over her shoulders.

Imbert answered in his place. "Very brave, and a fine swordsman!" cried the old pirate, while his black eyes flashed. "All Port Royal knows the young admiral and his famous wrist-play."

"Admiral!" Again the blue eyes looked into his, and again Biencourt had the same strange feeling,

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as if the speaker's thoughts were far away, and she were merely toying with the words.

"Aye!" went on Imbert, coming nearer, and laying his monstrous hands upon the mantel, "the late King Henry made him an admiral for these waters months ere his martyrdom, and since then he has swept the freebooters from the coast."

His highness the Duc de Montpelier leaned lazily backward in his chair, raising his black eyebrows. "So my good cousin, Henry of Navarre, chose for his admirals beardless boys!" he said very softly and very languidly.

There was an instant hush throughout the room, in which the clatter of the door rose almost to a scream. Imbert drew in his breath with a sharp, hissing sound; the poet looked up from his tablets, and Poutrincourt from the fire. These latter were just in time to see Biencourt leap to his feet and draw his sword, and almost before they understood the cause the fight had begun.

The first of the encounter was much in the duc's favor. He fenced so strongly behind a certain affectation of disdain, and his thrusts came so subtly home, that, ere five minutes had passed, Biencourt was bleed-

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ing from a wound in his left shoulder. The duc lowered his sword and surveyed his opponent. "Are you satisfied, monsieur?" he asked placidly.

"Not yet!" cried Biencourt, angrily.

Imbert drew near and examined the wound. "A scratch!" he called, contemptuously. Then, with a warning look, he lounged back to his position by the mantel. The room was very still as the two faced each other again, — the duc, dark and pale; Biencourt, with a crimson flush upon his cheeks.

There was the same writhing of swords, the same chilly music of steel, and once again the duelists swayed to and fro. Then for the second time the duc's sword found its mark; this time not far below the heart.

Biencourt leaned back, ashen white, upon Lescarbot's shoulder. His blood flowed fast and his eyes were closed as if in pain. The duc himself approached and surveyed him, leaning the while a trifle wearily upon his sword, for the last bout had been a fierce one.

"It was a brave fight," he said slowly.

At the sound of his voice Biencourt's blue eyes opened. "Can you stay the bleeding?" he asked

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huskily of Imbert, who with the deftness of an old campaigner was binding a mass of soft cloths about the wound.

Imbert nodded.

“Then a moment more and I am ready.”

“But, monsieur,” the duc courteously interposed, “your wound is deep and you have already done enough for honor. Believe me you have this night shown a swordsmanship I never saw before — I who have met and conquered every *maître d’armes* in France. It was but by using all my skill I touched you.”

But with the duc’s insult still rankling at his heart Biencourt was in no mood for fine speeches. “I can try once more,” he answered rather grimly, “and I warn you to be on your guard. Let no gleam of the stranger’s golden hair tempt you from your watchfulness, or ill may well betide you.”

At this the duc’s pale face flushed and he shook his head in fiercest anger. But he spoke no word. Then the two faced each other again.

Poutrincourt’s oval face was gray and haggard; Lescarbot looked on half eagerly, half sullenly; Imbert, his hands twined in his shaggy black hair,

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alone was imperturbable. And at one side, with head averted, the stranger leaned idly in her chair, smoothing her baby's forehead with her hand.

This time there was no respite. The two pressed each other fiercely, their swords flashing in the candlelight like twin twining snakes. To and fro they swayed ; a dozen times each saved his life as by a miracle ; their breath came in quick and quicker gasps, and still they fought on. The duc's face was now fiery red with passion, and it was evident no thought of mercy lingered in his mind. And for the first time he became uncertain of the result, for Biencourt was fighting with a dogged persistence that boded ill. Try as he would, his thrusts were parried so that presently he began half doubtfully to wonder if at last he had met his equal. And while these thoughts lingered in his mind, giving to his wounded adversary's face a look of pale foreboding, the infant in the stranger's arms began crying shrilly. For an instant the duc glanced hastily toward the chair in which she sat, his guard failed, and Biencourt, fainting from loss of blood, ran him through the chest.

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It was months ere Biencourt and the Duc de Montpelier met again. Then one June afternoon, when Acadie lay in a yellow swoon, the duc appeared before the two solitary huts, leaning heavily on a stick.

“We shall not quarrel again, I hope,” he said gayly, bowing to Biencourt, who was lounging in the shadow of the forest. “Of a truth I have no mind to stay longer in bed. And I have come, monsieur, both to make amends for my discourtesy on the evening of our meeting, and to beg the honor of your friendship.”

And having thus spoken, he bowed low again and waited, a short yet stately figure set against a background of deep green spruce. But his face, as Biencourt sprang forward to grasp his hand, showed haggard and drawn as if through pain.

This was the beginning of a strange friendship. Lescarbot had turned the duel into a ballad of Homeric proportions, variegated here and there with choice allusions to the “listless lady by the fire.” This the two read together, seated side by side on a rustic seat Imbert had arranged in the shadow — all except the ending, which the poet, despite his skill,

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had not yet been able to fashion to his mind. Beneath them the bay sparkled in the sunshine; to the right lay the fort, with its gleaming cannon; in the distance a purple mountain ridge reared itself softly against the sky. Of this scene the duc seemed never to weary. Morning after morning he lounged for hours on the rustic seat, idly drinking in its beauty. It was at the second of these meetings he asked Biencourt about his charge.

“You have no trouble with these Port Royal gallants?” he queried.

Biencourt shook his head.

“And how does madame—Manette, the Seigneur told me was her name—how does madame relish her forest life?”

“She is thinner and her cheeks are pale. Since her child died, I fear she grieves.”

For a time the duc sat silent, carelessly digging with his scabbard in the moist, black earth. “One may not see her?” he said at last, doubtfully.

“Why not? Without doubt you will respect her honor, and she seems lonely.”

On the duc's lips a faint smile trembled. For a moment he seemed about to laugh. But he only repeated, “So she seems lonely.”

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Biencourt rose and knocked at the door of the adjoining hut. "Does madame please to walk?" he called.

There was a reply from within, inaudible to the duc's ears, and in another moment the stranger lady, whose plain name of Madame Manette ill consorted with her stately air, appeared equipped for walking. The duc sauntered near.

"Madame Manette," said Biencourt, "I have the honor to present to your notice his highness Monsieur le Duc de Montpelier."

The duc's plumed hat swept the earth in greeting. "Methinks the climate suits us strangers ill," he said, gayly. "From your face it steals the roses; me it hinders too long of recovery."

Madame Manette shrugged her fine shoulders. "Are you in danger?" she asked politely. The subject was evidently uninteresting.

The duc shook his head and smiled. His black eyes were full of a strange light, and his lips quivered so that Biencourt, watching him, feared he might be in danger of overtaxing his new-found strength. Then the three set out through the forest, loitering along quaint footpaths brown with fallen pine needles,

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or stooping to gather wild flowers in the shelter of anciently bearded trees, where was naught but primeval stillness.

The walk that day, however, was a short one, for Madame Manette was weary, so that presently they found themselves again before the log hut, with its thatched roof and mossy walls. Vines of Imbert's planting were beginning to twine about the doorway, and in the air floated the dreamy scent of bursting pine buds. A half mile in the distance the four cannon on the bastion of Port Royal flashed brightly in the sunshine, and the flag of France flaunted civilization and progress in the face of the hoary forest; in a neighboring glade the conical wigwams of an Indian camp stood brown and lonely in the shadow.

At the doorway Madame Manette paused a moment before saying adieu; and as she leaned listlessly against the door, with her eyes fixed on the distant fort, the duc asked a question.

"Your baby!" he cried, abruptly; "where may its grave be?"

Madame Manette's blue eyes were scanning the great stone gateway, and for a moment it seemed she had not heard. Then, without turning her head,

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she said slowly : "It is buried where you stand. Your feet, monsieur, are above its heart."

Her questioner moved hastily aside, a deep pallor on his cheeks, and Madame Manette went on calmly : "It was my own choice it should lie there ; and my feet, passing over it each day, do but make it rest the sweeter." Then, bowing slightly, she retired within.

Next day the duc joined in the walk again, and on many succeeding days, which was very natural, since he and Biencourt were constantly together. Indeed, now that he had shaken off his listlessness, he had become a most fascinating companion. To Biencourt he talked for hours of the court and its affairs ; Imbert he held under a respectful spell with stories of his campaigns in the frozen north, where men perished by squadrons in the snowstorms. But his fascinations could hardly be said to extend to Madame Manette, who treated him throughout with a certain chilling disdain. His remarks she answered in monosyllables ; the flowers he gave her she languidly let fall ere five minutes had passed. But, without a sign of discomfiture, he next day gathered more and talked on, unconcerned. Very frequently,

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too, he made excuses to speak to her alone, when the morning stroll was ended, and before she had entered the hut. On these occasions, which generally ended in her abrupt withdrawal, he betrayed a curious dread of stepping upon the unmarked grave, standing always much to one side.

The summer waxed and waned upon the hillside, dying day by day in blood-red spots among the hardwood trees, and still Madame Manette lingered in Acadie. Her seclusion was more rigid than before; it might be that she was thinner, but that was all. At intervals, as vessels left for France, the Seigneur called to offer her passage home, which each time she smilingly refused, accompanying her refusal, however, with such liberal gifts to the colony's poor as sent Poutrincourt away in a maze of wonder. She took pleasure in her seclusion, she told Biencourt one day, when they were for an instant alone, and in their daily ramblings through the forest. It had been a strange experience, this summer on the very skirt of savagery, and her baby's grave had bound her to the place. But with the first snow she would return to France. And so time went on.

But after many mornings, there at length chanced

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one when Madame Manette was indisposed, and there was no walking. Next day the same thing happened, to the evident annoyance of the duc, who paced for hours up and down before her door. On the succeeding morning, however, she appeared again, looking very white and frail. She declined to walk, on account of weariness, and spent an hour idly in the rustic chair.

“You are weak, madame,” cried Biencourt, eagerly, as they walked back to her hut. “You need aid. Indeed, you seem to grow ever frailer and more weary.”

Madame Manette turned on the threshold of her domains and surveyed her two escorts with deliberation. There was a faint shadowy smile upon her lips, and her marvellous hair lay in a golden blaze against the white hollow of her cheeks. “He dreams — does he not?” she asked, addressing the duc.

“I fear his dreams are true.” And Biencourt, glancing at him, thought he had never looked so ghastly since his wound. His lips were aquiver and his words came from them with a strange tremor.

But Madame Manette shook her head. “You

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are both over anxious," she said lightly, though even as she spoke her voice faltered wearily. Then, with a bow and a glance at some wild-fowl flying near, she closed the door behind her, leaving the two gazing at each other with a mute, fearful questioning.

That night Biencourt chanced to be favored by a visit from Lescarbot. The poet had been wandering about the forest, vainly striving to fashion an ending to his famous ballad, and was consequently in a state of great depression. His figure drooped; his gray eyes stared moodily before him. And thus for hours he sat, while the moon rose above the trees and paled the solitary candle with her rays.

"There will never be an end," he cried at last, rising pettishly and flinging the door open wide. "For months have I thought upon it—the wild storm, the dicing, the newcomer, and the duel—and each time I reel back, baffled like a child at the entrance of a gloomy forest. For who can paint the motive that daily forms itself beneath his gaze? And here is that which came perhaps from far."

Monsieur Lescarbot's troubled face relaxed. His analysis evidently pleased him well, for he stepped briskly into the moonlight flung across the doorway.

By William Holloway, Jr.

Biencourt made no answer. He was busy with a long epistle, which a vessel on the morrow would carry to a certain black-eyed maid of honor at the court of France, and scarcely heeded what the poet said.

“From far! Who knows how far?” Lescarbot went on dreamily. “Perchance from the royal” — here he paused and crossed himself hastily, as heavy footsteps sounded near by. They came nearer still, and the poet drew in from the doorway, falling upon his knees in prayer. Biencourt sprang in wonder to his feet, and there, in the brilliant moonlight, a few feet from the hut, saw what had so transfigured his companion, a man bending laboriously beneath a heavy load — a load with lifeless limbs, and loose hair waving in the night wind. Then he knew, as the poet had known, it was the Duc de Montpelier with the dead form of Madame Manette upon his shoulders.

A moment only the duc paused before he staggered across the threshold, and, shivering violently, laid the body on the floor. Yet in that moment the thought of his broken trust stung Biencourt like a lash, and half unconsciously his sword flashed in the

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moonlight. But ere he could frame the question surging to his lips, it was answered.

The duc sank down beside the body, his left hand resting on the ashen face. "You will seek to know the meaning of the riddle," he said mechanically, without lifting his eyes from off her rigid form. "It is very simple. She was my wife. Nay, do not start, monsieur" — as Biencourt made a gesture of amazement. "It is as I say, and this is the body of Madame la Duchesse de Montpelier, wife of a prince of the blood, and — a Huguenot. And know you not" — and here the duc spoke lower and his words came slowly, while he made the sign of the cross — "know you not the Holy Father can disannul such marriages if it be the interest of the Truth? And among all the Huguenots of France — fierce and bitter as they have been and are — is there none more relentless than the comte, her father."

For an hour the duc spoke no word more. With his arms tightly clasped about his wife's stiffening form, he crouched beside her on the floor. And at the table near by the two unwilling spectators sat watching.

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Finally the duc spoke again, still with the same mechanical tone and with his eyes still fastened on her face. "She came to Acadie without my knowledge, by the connivance of some of her own faith at Rochelle, as she herself told me, hiring a swift trading bark that dogged our course all the way, and landed her in the darkness below the fort. And ever since our meeting here has she been most bitter to me. She gave me no reproaches. She was too proud, if you understand, but each morning her eyes rested scornfully on me, as we left her at the door. Often, too, in the evenings, would I wander about her hut, watching her shadow pass to and fro across the window. Once I tapped lightly at the door, giving a secret signal we had often idly used in France, and she bade me depart so sternly I never ventured signal more. To-night it chanced I was standing not far from the window, when suddenly I heard her fall. In an instant I was within, but Manette was already dead. And now she is dead, monsieur," went on the duc, his eyes glittering feverishly as he tossed the golden hair caressingly to and fro, "now she is dead, she is mine again. And I will bury her this night in a

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secret place I last week learned of, so that alien faces shall look on her no more, and where she shall slumber by the dust of dead Indian chiefs, and near the noise of a rushing stream. For it was by a brawling brook on her father's estate that we first met, and ever she loved its noises well."

The rest of the night to Biencourt was always like a half-forgotten dream. Together he remembered they had borne the icy body the distance of a hundred yards, when, wearied from their recent wounds, he and the duc had come perforce to a sudden stop. It was then he had left the duc and Lescarbot with their burden, and, running to the fort, brought Imbert, yawning, to their aid. After that the journey was easy, for Imbert poised Madame Manette's body on his giant shoulders, easily as a mother might raise her child, and mile after mile bore it on through the waving forest. Port Royal, its bastion and palisades swimming in yellow moonlight, was left behind; the forest closed over them, dark and sullen, and still they pressed on. The duc went first, leading the way without hesitation, for the path was well marked, though in shadow, and even to a stranger impossible to miss. And by this the others knew

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they were going to the ancient sepulchre of the Indian chiefs — a place of mysteries, where strange influences had their hiding-places.

The gray light of dawn was filtering coldly into the rocky well of sepulchre when they arrived. On all sides were niches in the walls, each niche a grave ; and, drowning all voices in a hoarse clamor, a tiny stream fell thirty feet adown the rock into a murky pool below, whence a chasm in the cliff led it downward to the sea.

It was here they buried Madame Manette, erstwhile Duchesse de Montpellier, the duc praying long and fervently. And that none might look upon her face again, Imbert, going higher up the stream, changed its course by means of massive rocks, so that now and forever that brawling stream flows down across her grave. And here, with the vagrant spray falling thickly upon their faces, did the duc bind them by a fearful oath to guard his secret well from all save Poutrincourt.

Then, while the sun rose, they went slowly back to Port Royal through the lightening forest. The duc staggered weakly ; his eyes were sunken ; there was a grayness upon his face much like the grayness

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of the dead face he had looked at so long. Nor did he speak until the great gate of the fort loomed in sight, when, rousing himself as if from slumber, he said musingly, "It is the ending of—a ballad, Monsieur Lescarbot."

On the Brink

By

Edwin Lefevre

ON THE BRINK

I

SUDDENLY it dawned upon them that they loved one another. They had been talking about mind-reading, and he had looked long and steadily into her eyes when she had challenged him to read her thoughts. They realized simultaneously what had happened. She had known that she loved him, and he, that he loved her. But each had sought to keep that knowledge from the other. Now they could hide it no longer.

They remained silent for a long time, avoiding each other's gaze. At last their eyes met.

He said, "Well?" His voice expressed nothing; in his eyes there was sorrow and — hope!

She shook her head, and he turned away his eyes; there was disappointment in them that he would not show. Then she said, very quietly, "You have read my thoughts?"

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“Yes,” he said, still without looking at her;
“and you —”

“I have read yours.”

Tears were in her eyes. If his, too, were wet, she could not see, for he was looking fixedly at a little pebble at her feet. At last he said, passionately, “Oh, why did I meet you! Why should I suffer so?”

“And I?” she said. “Is it not worse for me? Is not my sin greater, and therefore my punishment heavier, than yours? Oh,” — in answer to an impatient gesture of denial, — “you will meet some woman whom it will not be a sin to love, and you will —”

“You know I will not,” he interrupted.

“Yes, you will,” she said, very gently; “and then —”

He raised his head and gazed steadily at her. Then he said, challengingly, “You wish me to love another?”

She looked away from him and was silent. Gradually there crept into his eyes a look of hope; and hope was slowly turning into exultation when she spoke, so softly that he barely could hear her, “Yes.”

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Then he said, altogether too calmly, in too commonplace a manner, "Oh, very well, since you wish it —"

And she said, very firmly, "I wish it!"

Slowly they returned to the house. The sun was setting, and there was gold and nacre and glowing blood in the sky. In the garden the wind stirred the leaves gently, and there was sorrow in their song.

Her husband awaited them. "Is n't it a beautiful sunset?" he said to them from the piazza. "I suppose you've been looking at it. You might write a sonnet about it, my boy."

She went up to the gray-haired man and kissed him on the lips, and leaned against him, until he wound his arm about her waist, and she rested her head on his shoulder caressingly; and then she looked defiantly at the young man, who had drawn near.

The young man's hands closed tightly, and in his eyes there was disappointment and anger and some contempt. "Yes, John, I believe I *could* write a few elegies on the death of this Sun, who has shed his blood in his fight with Night, and has spattered it all over the sky, so that the angels will

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have to wash it off with their tears. Sunsets are my forte, anyway —”

“I have never seen any of your verses,” she said.

“Then you may congratulate yourself upon your lucky escape.”

The gray-haired man smiled good-naturedly and patted her cheek ; and she held it up to be kissed, and nestled closer to him. Then she looked at the young man, and in her eyes there was still defiance, and, though she would not have shown it, some interest. She said, “I have heard so much about them that I should like to read them.”

“Really ?”

“Yes.”

“You are reckless.” And the bantering tone did not hide from her the significance that lay behind his words.

“You must show some of them to her,” said the gray-haired man to him.

“All right. I’ll hunt them up, some time, and send them to you,” said the young man to her.

“Have n’t you any here ?” she asked.

“Yes,” he replied ; “but they are all love songs, and therefore not worth the reading.”

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"Indeed!" she said. The gray-haired man patted her cheek indulgently. This time she did not upturn her face for a kiss. And in her voice there was an unnecessary indifference as she said to the young man, "Will you let me read them to-night?"

"Oh, no," he replied, laughingly, though his eyes were serious.

"Why not?" she persisted.

"In the first place, because they are not worth anything; and then you might get an impression that I really meant what I wrote, and that I am deeply in love with some one."

"And you are not in love?" There was a challenge in her voice. The gray-haired man smiled at her girlish, artless curiosity.

"Certainly not!" the young man said decidedly.

"But were you in love when you wrote them?"

"I really don't know," he answered. "Perhaps I was."

"Well, *I* am," she said, looking at him steadily. And when his eyes had shown astonishment and had begun to shine with irrepressible hope, she continued: "Indeed I am, — with my own dearest husband,

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who is so good to me. Am I not, darling?" And she entwined her arms about the gray-haired man's neck and kissed him on the lips twice. And the gray-haired man laughed and looked pleased.

The young man's face was rigid and very pale. In the dusk they could not see that his lips were twitching. But she had grown strangely quiet.

A great stillness had fallen upon the world. The evening star was shining very brightly now, and in the east a little lone star was blinking tremulously.

Presently she said, "I am afraid," and shivered.

The gray-haired man drew her closer to him, kissed her, and said: "Afraid of what, little coward? But come, it is time to go in, my child."

The young man's thoughts had been many during the brief spell of silence that had preceded her words, and now he said: "Yes, *little sister*, you ought to go in now."

The gray-haired man laughed good-naturedly at this jest of his young brother's. But she drew a quick breath and went into the house hurriedly.

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II

THE gray-haired man was nodding over his newspaper in the library. She had just ceased to hold the latest novel upside down in her hands. She hesitated for a moment; then she arose, saying: "It is so warm here; I am going on the piazza."

The gray-haired man started. "What's that, my dear?" he asked, shamefacedly. He feared that she might think he had been asleep. They had been married but four months.

"I am going to sit on the piazza; it's cooler," she said.

"Is Dick there?"

"Yes."

"All right, then. But don't stay too long; the night air is not good for you." It certainly was not good for him, so he remained in the library nodding over his newspaper.

She went to the piazza. Sitting on the veranda-rail, the young man was smoking. At the sound of her steps he started up eagerly; but when she was

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near him, his eyes showed nothing, his face was calm.

“A beautiful night, is n’t it?” said she.

“Yes,” he acquiesced. He stifled a yawn ostentatiously. Then, as though the thought had just struck him, “Shall I fetch you a chair?”

“Oh, no, thanks; I am going upstairs shortly,” she said, with indifference.

“Shall I fetch you a chair?” This in another tone.

“Yes,” she answered.

He did so, and then resumed his seat on the veranda and smoked in silence.

Overhead, the sky was as molten sapphire and the stars seemed more numerous than ever before, and brighter and nearer to the earth.

“Lovely, is n’t it?” she said at last.

“What is?”

“The sky, of course.”

“Yes.”

After a silence she said: “I’ve never seen so many stars before; have you?”

“Yes,” he said, slowly, “there was one more last night, — mine!”

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“Yours?”

“Yes.”

There was another pause, — a long one. She was looking at a little star that was shining very faintly low in the sky. Finally she said, softly, “Show me your verses.”

“I cannot,” he said, almost in a whisper.

“Why not?” She avoided his gaze.

“You know very well,” he answered.

“But if I ask you as a great favor —”

“I should still refuse,” he said, wearily.

“You are very rude.”

“And you are very cruel,” he returned, monotonously.

“But not so cruel as you, — to arouse a woman’s curiosity, and then to refuse, absolutely, to gratify it!”

“Oh, so it is merely curiosity?” His voice trembled slightly.

She hesitated; her foot was tapping on the ground nervously. Then, as if she had weighed the consequences, she said: “Of course, merely curiosity.”

“Then you lied this afternoon, and you are only a coquette? I might have known it!” He spoke with difficulty for his teeth were clinched tightly.

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“How dare you speak to me so?” she said, angrily.

And then he answered in a low voice, as if fearful of being overheard: “And how dare you forget that you are my brother’s wife?”

She gave a half-smothered cry of pain, as though he had struck her. Then she buried her head in her hands and sobbed softly.

“Don’t!—Please don’t—Oh, don’t—Gladys—” he said. It was the first time he had called her thus, by name, and she said, between her sobs: “Oh, I am so unhappy, so unhappy!”

She raised her head and looked at him. Her eyes were filled with tears. He went toward her hesitatingly. By her side he paused; his hands were clinched and held close to his face. He said hoarsely: “Don’t. Don’t make—me—forget—” He drew nearer; she held up her arms as if to ward off a blow, and then the gray-haired man’s voice called out sleepily from a window on the other side of the cottage: “Gladys! Dick!”

“Yes?” said the young man.

“You had better come in now.”

“Yes. Coming.”

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III

AT breakfast the next morning the young man said : " I am going back to the city this morning, John."

" Are you ? When will you return ?" said the gray-haired man. He did not think his honeymoon had waned yet ; but it never shines very brightly on three people at once, and —

" I don't know," answered the young man. " I shall go to Jack Livingston's first ; I promised to spend a week or two with him. And then I think I'll go to Maine. I am told the fishing is exceptionally good this season."

She said nothing. The gray-haired man began to talk about the anxious cares of a floriculturist.

After breakfast she disappeared. The gray-haired man said good-bye to his younger brother, to whom he had been as a father, and went out to consult with his head gardener about a new variety of orchids which he had just received from the Isthmus of Panama.

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All that morning the young man wondered if she would not bid him farewell. At last the groom came to tell him that the cart awaited him.

He was in the hallway, deliberating whether he should seek her, when she came down the stairs slowly. Her face wore a look it had never known before. Occasionally it is seen on some women when they wear the widow's garb for the first time, — a blending of sorrow and yearning, and, withal, resignation. She halted at the foot of the stairs, her hand resting upon the carved post. "So you are going?" she said, monotonously.

"Yes." His voice was low.

"For a long time?"

"Yes." He dared not look at her.

"It is for the best," she said. He answered nothing.

The groom came to the door and said: "I beg your pardon, sir, but the train is due now, sir."

"Very well, I'm coming."

She gave two sharp little indrawn gasps. Then, speaking very quickly, she said: "Wear this. My mother gave it to me when I was confirmed. When she died I took it off because it reminded me of her

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and it made me cry. It is sacred to me. It is all I can give you. I am sure she would not blame me —” She paused and looked at him questioningly.

“No,” he answered, reverently.

“Take it !” She held a little ring, a plain gold band, toward him, and he took it and with some difficulty placed it on his little finger.

“Good-bye !” she said.

He looked at her imploringly. His lips dared not utter what his eyes told so plainly. It was a request, nothing more, but she shook her head.

“Good-bye,” she repeated, extending her hand.

He took it and held it tightly.

“Good-bye,” he said. Her hand remained in his. She could not withdraw it and there were tears in her eyes as she said, gently, for the last time :
“Good-bye.”

“Good-bye,” he said again. He bent over to kiss her hand, but she drew it back quickly. Then she went up the stairs slowly.

He had resolved not to look back, but before the little cart had gone two hundred yards he turned his head. There was no one on the piazza, and her

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windows being curtained he could not tell whether she was looking at him from her room. He gazed long towards the little cottage. Then, as he heard the whistle of the approaching train, he turned his eyes to the front, and his face took on a calm, resolute look.

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By
Anthony Leland

A WOMAN'S LIFE

“HE is dead!”

“Oh! Miss 'Lizabeth! and you alone with him?”

“Yes, I was alone with him.”

She said this in a manner which seemed to imply that there was nothing strange in the fact that she was alone with him. She was always alone with him, was she not? Was it necessary that she open the doors and call them all in because he was dying?

They passed from the narrow hall into the front room with its green-paper window-shades, its worn carpet and meagre furniture. His bed had been moved down from the floor above when his last illness had seized him, and here it had remained, a black walnut bedstead, with towering head-board, which shut out the light from one of the two windows in the room. This bedstead had been one of his few, his very few, extravagances in years gone by,

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and in its dark shadow he lay now rigid. He had been a stern, grizzled man in life, but the sternness then had been as very softness compared with the hard, cold outline of the face now upon the pillow in the green light of the lowered window-shade.

They moved about the room on tip-toe, speaking in the hissing whispers considered appropriate by them in the presence of death.

“When did it happen?” some one asked.

“Half-hour ago.”

“Had n’t I better call the doctor or the minister?”

“I don’t see what good they’d be.”

Another woman crept in silently, a shawl huddled about her head.

“I jest heard,” she whispered.

They waited in silence for her to go on. She was the woman of the village who always officiated at the “laying out” of their dead. The reason for this no one had ever sought. Possibly the right was hers because she so enjoyed the grewsome privilege. At least she clung to it tenaciously.

“Now, Miss ’Lizabeth, you jest go upstairs and I’ll tend to things,” she said, while the other women awaited her commands, half resenting her cool as-

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sumption of control, but with a full consciousness of her capability in "tending" to such "things."

The bare little church, with its white walls and staring windows, its stiff pine pulpit painted a dingy yellow, with the minister's green upholstered chair behind it, was well-filled the day of the funeral. A "burying" was not a thing to miss without grave cause. There were old men and old women in the congregation who had not missed a funeral within ten miles of them for fifty years. They sat solemnly waiting for the minister to begin the services, taking close notice of the coffin and calculating its cost. Not a difficult problem for them with their long experience. They also noted closely the appearance of the one mourner who sat directly in front of the pulpit, alone save for the presence in her pew of the woman who had come to her huddled under a shawl. This strange woman always sat with the mourners as though she felt a claim upon the bodies of the dead until their final surrender to mother earth. But the dead man's daughter sat away from her companion quite at the farthest end of the seat, as if she would be as much apart from them all in her present loneliness as she had been before. It was fifteen

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years since she had sat with them in the church, and they looked at her now with curiosity. A slight little woman, with tired eyes and dull brown hair streaked with gray !

The minister arose and folded upon the open Bible his lean hands with their great veins and yellow joints. He prayed long and laboriously, his voice rising from a doleful sing-song drawl into a shout and then sinking into a whisper. They wagged their heads knowingly in the pews and whispered to one another that it was a "pow'ful effort." Toward the close of his prayer many eyes were turned expectantly toward the woman who sat alone. The minister was calling loudly for "the lost sheep who is not with us safe in the shelta' of Zion's walls. O Lord !" he wailed, "make yoh wahnin' plain to her onseein' eyes that she may seek safety from the wrath to come." If the woman heard or understood his words no acknowledgment of that fact touched her thin face. She sat with folded hands, her eyes upon the narrow front of the box-like pulpit. Then the minister began his sermon. From the earliest dawn of the dead man's life, through his childhood, youth, and manhood unto

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the last moment of his old age the speaker journeyed, going unctuously over the dreary details of the meagre, common history. They all knew it well enough, but they listened greedily, jealously fearful that the speaker might overlook a single incident in the man's dull story. When he had exhausted every period of his subject's life, the minister began the apotheosis of the man. His goodness, his charity, his uprightness, and, above all, his "tireless labors in the vineyard of the Lord" were dwelt upon. He had in truth been cruel and hard and mean. They all knew this, but he had lived and died "a member in good standing," and any other treatment of his character by the preacher would have been a scandalous thing, unheard of and not to be forgiven. At the close of his discourse the minister turned his colorless eyes upon the woman who sat apart. "There was," he said, his voice falling into a slow and solemn drawl, "there was one cross which our Lord and Master seen fit to bind upon the shoulders of the brother who has jest gone befoh us into the glory of the Heavenly Kingdom. A cross hard to bear, a cross whose liftin' he had wrestled for with the Lord Jesus often and mightily in prayer. But

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which Divine Providence seen fit to allow to remain upon the shoulders of his faithful son. It was, my brothers and sisters, the refusal of the only one of his kin to accept the Lord, to wash herself in the blood of the Lamb, to join with those who journey onward safe in the arms of Jesus into the glory of everlastin' life." His voice had risen into a shout. "The night is comin', the day is almost done. Oh! let us pray for them who falters and will not turn from the wrath of God befoh it is too late." His voice sank suddenly into a whisper, and the words "too late" went hissing out over the heads of the people who sat with craning necks and knowing faces cruelly turned toward the woman, whose eyes for a single instant had not left the front of the dingy yellow pulpit.

The hearse, with the one closed carriage of which the village boasted, moved slowly away from the church along the muddy road, followed by a straggling line of wagons. The majority of the people lingered about the church door watching the woman who sat stiffly erect in the carriage, the minister facing her, at her side the woman who seemed to have so strange a love for the dead. This woman sat

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with her handkerchief pressed to her eyes as if she must needs make amends for the other's stony composure.

The road, after leaving the village in the bottom lands along the river, wound up the side of the bluff upon which the burying ground was situated. It was an autumn day, and the golden haze of that most glorious of seasons in the Missouri valley bathed the wide stretch of country upon which the cemetery looked down. A sky of marvellous blue spread its canopy above them, while the bright glow of the western sun brought out in pitiless detail the dreary little home of the dead with its crude tiptilted monuments and scattered, sunken graves, its rays enfolding with no mellowing touch the group of sallow-faced men and women in rusty and shapeless garb who clustered about the newly made grave. They lifted their voices and sang quaveringly amid the strangely death-like stillness of the declining day. It was a dismal tune in plaintive minors, and as they dragged it out in unmusical and uncertain tones it seemed a fitting symbol of their narrow, unlovely lives. When the last clod of reddish clay had fallen upon the oblong mound, they turned and walked away to leave

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their dead unnoticed until another of the living should pass from the grimness of life into the — to them — greater grimness of death.

As the procession crawled along the heavy road toward the cluster of houses upon the river's bank, the minister, his great hands resting upon his knees, his pale eyes blinking solemnly, began : —

“E-eliz’beth, you are left alone now.” She nodded her head in affirmation. “You have n’t much of this world’s goods.”

“I’ve kept two of us from starvin’ for five years. I reckon I can keep myself,” she replied stiffly.

“Yoh father was well-fixed once, but the Lord seen fit to deprive him of his earthly treasures that he might lay more store by them gifts which is above earthly price.”

“He was a graspin’ man and over-reached himself.”

The woman beside her sniffed reproachfully and glanced at the minister with sorrowful air. The man stirred uneasily and lifted a hand in expostulation.

“A daughter should n’t jedge. If you was enlightened by the spirit you would n’t be so lackin’ in Christian charity.”

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She had endured much that long afternoon, and she raised her eyes now defiantly.

“I’ve done my duty by him—I’ve done my duty for twenty years without complainin’.”

“The pride of the onregenerate must be humbled,” returned the minister.

She vouchsafed no reply, and they went on in silence, the setting sun touching with softened light her worn face and tired eyes.

The sun was low in the western sky when the two women reached the small house, once white but now a dirty gray, with great yellow streaks following the lines of the overlapping clapboards. The black waters of the swiftly flowing river were flecked with red and gold under the level rays of the sun, the rounded hills on the other side of the stream were softly blue, toward the east a white fog was rising. A flock of wild geese high in the gray-blue sky was flying swiftly southward, spread out in a great straggling V. The mournful cry of their leader reached the two women faintly, the flight of the wild geese was an unfailing sign of approaching winter, and they watched the black lines of the flying fowls until they vanished in the southern sky, their weird cry grow-

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ing fainter and sadder and finally dying away, leaving the swish of the river against its muddy bank the only sound which troubled the quiet of the autumn twilight. Two women with hushed voices and funereal faces waited inside the dingy front room of the house.

"It was a right smart gathering," said one of them.

"I never see a finer," said the other.

"And the minister was mighty pow'ful," ventured the third in mournful tone.

They looked at the dead man's daughter expectantly. Common decency surely required some expression of gratified approval of the congregation and the sermon. But she was folding her shawl carefully, laying it upon the bed alongside her rusty bonnet. She seemed not to have heard their voices. Then she sat stiffly by the window looking out at the mud-clogged road.

"I hope you feel reconciled, Miss 'Lizbeth," one of the women began.

"I reckon I am. He's been awful hard to take care of," she replied with her hard honesty. She turned her eyes away from the window and looked wearily at her visitors.

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“It’s supper time. There ain’t any use of your stayin’ with me.”

The three women arose, angry at their dismissal.

“I ’lowed you’d want some one to stay with you the first night,” said one of them with a lugubrious sniff.

“I’ve got all the nights of my life to stay alone in. I ’bout as well begin now.”

She watched them as they went away through the deepening gloom, their heads together nodding wisely. They were talking about her, of course. She knew well enough what they said. She knew how hard and strange and unfeeling they were calling her. And as she sat alone by the window she wondered whether she was all these. The bed in its dark corner brought to her mind the picture of the man who had first quit it for his narrow bed upon the hillside. She fancied that she saw his hard, thin, yellow face upon the pillow now; that she heard his querulous voice demanding her attention, upbraiding her for some fancied forgetfulness, fiercely denouncing her for her lack of “religion.” How hard he had been! As the woman’s thoughts travelled back along the years she

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could not recall one kind word, one touch of thankfulness for her unremitting care, for her absolute immolation of life, hope, love upon the altar of "duty." Twenty years! what a long time it seemed!

She passed into the back room and pressed close to the little square looking-glass which hung against its wall. The daylight was well-nigh gone, but she could yet discern the reflection of her face against the background of gray twilight. How old she looked! How sallow she had grown! There were great lines about her mouth and deep furrows between her eyes. And her hair, — how dingy it was with its streaks of yellowish gray! Twenty years ago she had been proud of her hair. It had been bright and soft. She was twenty years old then, and there were roses in her cheeks, and her eyes, so pale and tired now, had been blue and fresh then. She wondered if she had wept their color and their brightness away. Perhaps that was the reason no tears were left for her father. She had shed them all long ago for the man whom she had loved and given up.

She did not return to the front room where the

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great bed loomed so weirdly in the gloom, but sat by the one window in the little back room, half kitchen, half dining-room, looking out upon the river growing blacker and colder in the falling night as it flowed from out of the west where a rapidly diminishing, dull red streak marked the track of the vanished sun.

Twenty years since her mother died and her sister, selfish in her new life as a wife, had said that 'Lizbeth's duty lay in their father's house. He might marry again or die in a few years. Surely it was not so hard for a young girl to wait. So she had waited, her lover fretting as lovers will, until one day she had awakened to the fact that a man's patience is not like a woman's. There had been one awful night which she remembered after all these years with a shudder. A night when, for the first and only time in her hard life, she had turned hotly upon the stern old man and told him of her love and of her wrecked girlhood, praying wildly for some help, for some sympathy. She caught her breath sharply now as she recalled her father's bitter words. That same night her lover left. Fifteen years had come and gone since then. The great world had

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taken him, and whether he lived or had been claimed again by mother earth the woman who sat and dreamed of the past alone in the dusk knew naught of him. She had practised a woman's faithfulness; she had reaped a woman's hard reward. Afterwards her sister died and left to her care a blue-eyed babe. How she had poured out upon that baby boy the pent up mother-love within her. But the gods in their wisdom had taken him too. In this still night as she lived over again the years which were gone, she seemed to feel the clasp of those baby arms about her neck and to hear the crooning of that soft baby voice.

And then came the long years of her father's illness when she knew no moment of rest or peace. It had been a long struggle between a loveless woman on one side and gaunt starvation upon the other without one word of gratitude to strengthen her. And they called her hard because she could not weep! She looked at her hands, holding them up close to her face. How misshapen and ugly from toil they were!

It was quite dark now and the river murmured strangely under the wind which was creeping down

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from the north. Her hands fell back into her lap and two great tears coursed slowly down her worn face — not for the man who lay under the stars in the little cemetery on the hill, but for her own vanished youth and love and hope.

“When the King
Comes In”

By

Anthony Leland

“WHEN THE KING COMES IN”

SHE slunk along in the shadows listlessly, staring with unheeding eyes at the shuffling crowds upon the sidewalks, at the fly-blown, tawdry splendors of the shop windows, and at the yellow gloom of the pawn-shop. The autumn wind swept sharply up from the river, and she drew her old plaid shawl about her tightly with one hand, while with the other she covered her swollen and discolored cheek. The sidewalks and roadway were covered with a thin, slippery coating of mingled filth and mud. An autumn mist, heavy with smoke, pressed itself tightly down upon the street, deadening the light of the electric lamps at the corners into mere splotches of a dully-luminous gray. Frowsy, pale-faced girls hung about dark doorways where they bandied mirthless jests with lounging men and boys. In front of a bar-room, whence came the fangling notes of a piano and the scream of a high-pitched soprano voice, a man stood and urged the passers-by to go

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in and witness "the dizziest 'vawdyville' in the city." The woman in the old plaid shawl passed him without heeding his blatant voice. She had heard his sing-song shout many times; the "dizzy vawdyville" was nothing new. There never was anything new in Myrtle Street; it was ever the same ugly, sordid, joyless place day and night, week in and week out. It was always crowded with people, but it was always strangely sullen and mirthless. You never heard any one laugh there. At times when some one slipped and fell upon the slime of the pavement, or when one of the white-faced girls hurled shrill defiance at a man or at her companions, a hoarse human bark rent the air, but it was not a laugh. Even the children, who scrambled in the gutters and crept in and out of the dark alleys, forgot to laugh.

The woman with swollen and discolored cheek, who was crawling along in the shadows, halted in front of a dram-shop on a corner, and gazed doubtfully, longingly, at its swinging door. She was wondering if perchance Red Mike would trust her for a drink. She felt keenly the chill air from the river. She was strangely weary and down-hearted, too.

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Earlier in the evening she and her man had quarrelled. He was drunk, as usual, and had struck her, but for some unaccountable reason she had not screeched and struck back and tried to claw his face. She had simply grabbed her old shawl and escaped into the street, where she had wandered about for an hour. It was very odd that she had acted thus, and now she was shamefaced about asking Red Mike for a drink of whiskey ! He got all their meagre earnings, anyway, did Red Mike, and he was usually easy enough about donating a dram or two when they were down in their luck, and heretofore she had n't minded asking him. And if he chanced to refuse, she eased her mind by a good mouthful of curses, which she spat at him like a cat. But to-night she was foolishly squeamish about asking him ; she feared the loafers about the bar would jeer at her if he refused ; her face pained her where Con's blow had fallen, and she was cold and shivering, and — well, she was losing her nerve. So she turned away from the hot glow of the bar-room door and passed on into the mists of the street.

As she crawled along there came to her ears a quick thud of a drum-beat and the sound of men and

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women's voices singing. Marching through the gloom they came, a flapping banner above their heads, the red shirts of the men and the blue, scarlet-banded bonnets of the women lending for a moment a patch of color to the dim dinginess of the street. Suddenly they paused and fell upon their knees in the road, while a man's voice wailed out a prayer. Time was when Myrtle Street giped at the Salvationists and threw rocks at them and hustled them about. But that was when the red shirts and the flapping banner were something new. The newness was gone now, and Myrtle Street merely shuffled indifferently past, and the beat of the big drum, the strident voices of the exhorters were quite as much a part of the night sounds of the place as the bawling of the showman or the chatter of the frowsy girls. The woman, shivering under her shawl and fondling her bruised cheek, glanced apathetically at the kneeling men and women, when quickly her eyes became fixed upon the face of one of them whom she knew. It was Maggie, the girl who once occupied a dark little hole of a room next her own in the big tenement house where she yet lived. Maggie ! a forlorn, starving thing of whom

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she had lost track entirely — in truth, she had not thought of her since the day when the poor, snivelling, pale-faced creature had been turned into the street for not paying her rent. Myrtle Street does not waste much time in tracing the whereabouts of unfortunate acquaintances, nor in thinking of them after they drift out of sight under the ever-mounting wave of disaster which laps hungrily thereabout. But Maggie in a big bonnet, with her eyes closed and kneeling in the mud, was enough to arouse Myrtle Street's benumbed curiosity. So the bedraggled woman on the sidewalk pressed quite close to the curb and stared at her, wondering vaguely at the transformation. The man ended his prayer, and his companions, rising to their feet, began to sing again. The woman on the curb took no heed of the words which they sang. She was not for some moments vividly conscious of the song at all; she was conscious only of being tired and cold. Her curiosity regarding Maggie was dying, and she loitered with the little group which huddled upon the curb, simply because she had nowhere else to go. But as she stood there in the mist with her sunken eyes staring vacantly into the night, the music which

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touched her ears began to affect her oddly. It was a curious, wailing melody, with a barbaric accompaniment of jingling tambourines, and as its monotonous, insistent swing beat the air a strange feeling of awakening began to stir her dull veins. She weaved to and fro a little in unison with the measure of the song. She closed her eyes and felt a tightening in her throat. She clutched her shawl. She felt a wild desire to cry out or sob. Suddenly they ceased to sing, and she opened her eyes with a start. Maggie stepped into the little semi-circle of men and women, and in high, hard tones began to speak.

"Oh! Those is great, great words, my friends, which we have just sung," she said; "awful words! Terrifyin' words! Did you hear 'em? Did you understand 'em? Did they come home to you?"

" 'When the King comes in,
Like lightning's flash will that instant show
Things hidden long from friend and foe.
Just what he is will each one know,
When the King comes in.' "

"Think of it! Think of it! Like a flash will it be, and you will know and I will know — every-

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body will know just what we are. Oh ! It is awful ! Like lightning's flash will that coming be — remember that ! Don't try to believe it is far off. It is n't. It may be to-night. It may be within an hour — a minute — a second, for you and me. But be it near or far, it's coming, coming, coming !” Her voice shrilled piercingly, and the woman, listening so intently upon the curb, felt a thrill of excitement at the sound. It was not clear to her what it all meant, but she had a queer feeling of awe as she looked at Maggie's drawn face and listened to her strained, sharp voice. “My God !” the girl continued, “think of it ! Think if He comes to-night and finds you in all your sin and wickedness and filth. Think, think and be afraid. Think, and before it's too late, get saved ! I am saved, and I thank God to-night for it !”

A low chorus of “Glory to God !” “I believe !” “I believe !” came from her companions.

“I am glad to-night to stand here to tell you that I am saved and happy — oh ! so happy ! Why do you wait ? Some of you know me — I was sinful and tired and afraid once, but not now, thank God ! not now. I'm saved, saved, saved !”

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Louder and wilder grew the girl's cry. She waved her arms violently, and paced rapidly to and fro. The listening woman shifted her position from the sidewalk to the gutter. Her hands loosened their clutch upon her shawl; she wrung them constantly as she looked with wondering eyes at Maggie—Maggie who was n't tired nor afraid any more, and was happy, and all because she was "saved"! What did it all mean? How had it happened?

The girl stopped abruptly in her walk, and, as though answering her thought, cried, "It is so easy to get saved, too. All you have to do is to throw yourself on your knees and call on Jesus, and give yourself up to Him, and all your sins and fears and troubles and burdens are gone, and you'll be happy and glad and free and saved forever!"

Without a pause her voice shot into the song which they had sung before; but now its measure was changed to a clear, quick chant, with which she kept time by a soft patting with her hands. Clearer and higher grew her tones, and her companions, sinking to their knees, moaned in hushed voices a weird accompaniment, while the gently shaken tambourines lent again their strange barbaric rhythm,

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marked from time to time by the great drum's muffled beat.

Nearer and nearer to the semi-circle of kneeling figures stole the listening woman. Tears were streaming from her eyes, her blue lips quivered, a great sob tore itself from her tight throat. At length she stood quite within the lines of the singers, and then, with a strange, wild cry, she, too, fell upon her knees in the slime of the street. Her old shawl fell from her head, her arms rested upon the drum, her swollen face was buried in them. A great shout of "Glory to God!" went up about her, and some one on the curb cried amazedly, "Why, it's old Kit!" But she heard only that monotonous wailing voice chanting stridently "When the King Comes In." Afterwards there came a knowledge of some one's arm across her shoulders, of whispered words and urgent voices, a sensation of being lifted to her feet and helped along the street, and then a confusing blur of yellow light from oil lamps in a dingy hall. And at length full consciousness, dull fatigue, and an overwhelming desire for sleep.

Maggie and one of the brothers in red jersey and jaunty cap walked home with her, pouring into her

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ears encouraging advice in strange, cant words, which she but half understood. At the doorway of the human hive where she and Con slept and fought and starved the man looked sharply at Maggie.

"You are sure!" he whispered.

"Yes — they 're married," replied the girl.

"You will come to the barracks early to-morrow morning?" he asked, turning to Kit.

She promised to do so, and, passing into the dark hall, climbed upward to where Con lay in drunken stupor.

The following morning Kit stepped into a new world — a world of friendly words and close companionship. The squalidly poor know nothing of that luxury called friendship. They are huddled together in vast crowds, squeezed and packed by scores within narrow limits, jostled and elbowed by their kind at every turn. They are suffocated by close association. But of fellowship, of interest in one another's aims, of sympathy with one another's hardships, they know nothing. Like starving dogs over a bone, they growl and snarl and fly straight at throats. So, when Kit crept half sullenly into the barracks and was greeted by a loud chorus of inter-

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ested questions and by unstinted praise, the unfamiliar warmth of friendly words thawed into life her sluggish sensibilities. And, too, an entirely new view of herself and the world was suddenly opened to her bewildered gaze, — for the first time in her hard life she was looked upon as a human being of some importance. They told her that she was suddenly become different from her kind, she was better than they, she was “saved.” Not only that, but she must “save” others. She must quit the old life, and work for the common good. Her new friends were as uncouth and as poor and as hard pressed as herself. In their attitude there was none of that maddening condescension, none of that supercilious casting of surplus comforts at her feet, as one would toss a half-eaten orange toward a hungry-eyed beggar brat, which was the only sort of charity Kit had known of hitherto. The friendship of the Salvationists was the frank comradeship of plain men and women; their charity was the outcome of a crude, but living, religious idea. And their wild enthusiasm caught her dull soul in its sweep and lifted it a little above the fetid mists of her world. Some latent spark of womanly ambition was stirred into life, and with

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halting, dogged feet she tried to climb out of the dank valley of her past.

It was a wearisome task, but the exhilarating sense of friendly interest in her success sustained her. The old appetite for strong drink stung her, but the excitement of the new life helped to dull the craving. She tramped the streets with her companions, her cracked voice shouting quaveringly with them as they sang. She stepped sometimes into the little semi-circle at the street corners to tell excitedly "how glad she was that she was saved." She knelt with the others and prayed aloud for those who were not as she. She was one of a great, enthusiastic army, held up and aided by the superficial strength which comes of close fellowship and common aims. But with that growth of strength in one quarter there came a strange weakness in another. She was growing childishly afraid of Con, and with the growth of that fear there started into life and waxed strong a new loathing and hatred for his rum-soaked person. She would have fled from him, only that her new masters told her she must stick to him. It was her duty to cling to him and to "save" him. Their first injunction she obeyed meekly ; but to their second

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command she turned a deaf ear. She knew what Con was; they did not. Every human creature in the wide world might be saved — except her husband. He was beyond the pale of humanity. So long as she did not bother him, he paid little attention to her goings and comings. Only once she ventured to protest when he had spent a week's earnings for drink (Con had a "pull" with the ward "boss," and when there were no other means of getting money for drink he found employment with the street-cleaners), and he had knocked her down for her temerity, and after that she held her peace and wished dumbly that he might die.

At length there came a proud day when Kit, after unwonted labor over her wash-tub, was the possessor of a decent black gown and of the long-coveted poke bonnet. It was the eve of a great rally at the barracks, when some officer of high degree from "head-quarters" was to review the ranks of his army. At the close of day, when the long shadows were beginning to steal across the bare little room, with its musty bed, its one chair, and its rickety table pushed into a corner, Kit crouched upon the floor close up under the gray light of her window, intent upon her

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work. There were but a few stitches needed to complete her gown, and her stiff fingers fumbled eagerly with the unfamiliar needle. Her thoughts were busy with the glories of the morrow, and she crooned one of the Salvationist hymns as she sewed. And to her singing in the twilight there came the sound of shuffling footsteps outside her door. She looked up apprehensively as the door flew open to admit her husband. He was drunk, sullenly, brutally drunk.

"Where's my supper?" he demanded, falling heavily into the chair. "Where's my supper, I say?" he repeated, fixing an evil eye upon her.

"I'll get it now, Con. I was busy workin' on my dress, an' I clean forgot your supper," she explained, humbly.

"Yer dress?" he asked. "What right's a measly fool like you with dresses? Le's see it." He stretched forth his hand. She caught the black garment sharply away from him.

"No, you'll spoil it!" she cried, tossing the dress into a corner behind the bed. "You just set still there, an' I'll get you somethin' to eat."

"Eatin' be damned!" he replied, surlily. "I

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want somethin' to drink. Here ! you take the can an' get somethin' from Mike's. 'F you can buy clothes, you can buy drinks."

"No, no, Con, not now. Wait till I get supper."

"I don't want no supper ! You rush de can, I tell you !"

"I won't !"

"The hell you won't !"

He started from his chair and went towards her, but something in her eyes made even his sodden senses recoil. He looked at her dubiously a moment, and then stumbled out of the room, muttering thickly.

As the door closed behind him, the woman sprang for her gown, and, dragging it from the corner, slipped it on. A few more stitches were needed in it, but she dared not wait to take them. A great terror filled her soul. She felt that her husband would return quickly, uglier and wilder by a few drams. With shaking fingers she pinned her gown together as best she might. She smoothed her scanty, dry, dead hair with her hands, and then she lifted her bonnet from the bed. She held it a mo-

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ment admiringly, drawing her fingers softly over its trimmings of dark-blue silk, and along its narrow band of scarlet ribbon, where the bright gilt letters shone. She put it on her head and tied the soft strings carefully under her chin. She glanced hesitatingly at the old plaid shawl, wishing that she had a better one, but the night was cold, and she drew it about her shoulders. With a little sigh of relief she turned to leave the room. As her hand touched the door-latch she heard Con's heavy tread upon the stairs. She noted that he staggered a little, and with a quick indrawing of her breath she drew herself flat against the wall in the shadows. The man threw the door open fiercely, steadying himself against the jamb as he peered into the dim room.

"Where are you, you she-devil?" he called.

The woman made no sound, and he stepped inside the room, with his broad back towards her. Inch by inch she crept along against the wall towards the door, as he stood turning from side to side in his maudlin search for her, and as her feet touched the threshold he turned and saw her. He rushed forward and grabbed her arms.

"Givin' me the dirty sneak, are you?" he

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growled, shoving her inside the room and closing the door. "What d' yer mean? Eh?"

Kit made no answer. She backed off, her face gleaming white inside her big bonnet.

"Yer a nice one, ain't you?" he continued. "Won't get me nothin' to eat or drink, an' spendin' yer money fur clothes, an' then tryin' to make a sneak! Oh! I was onto you all the time! You white-faced fool! What d' yer mean? Eh? Damn you, what d' yer mean?"

"Stop, Con! Don't hit me!"

He stumbled forward deliberately and struck her upturned face. She staggered into the corner by the table, and faced him again. A tiny stream of something red trickled down her cheek. Her eyes were suddenly ablaze.

"Let me go!" she shrieked. "Let me go!"

"Yer'll go an' get de can filled, that's where yer'll go!"

"I won't—*never!*"

A spasm of hate and rage and terror writhed in her face. With the quickness of desperation she caught a knife from the table and waited for him.

He lunged towards her with uplifted arm. Before

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his blow fell she gave one swift thrust, and his arm came down simply upon her shoulder. For a moment he stood strangely still. He clenched his fist; his teeth were tight; he breathed hard through his nose.

"Damn you —" Then he reeled and fell.

And as the woman stood there in the gathering gloom, with his blood crawling towards her on the floor, she heard the beat of a drum, and the sound of voices singing shrilly, far down the street. On they came, nearer and louder, until her listening ears heard the thrum of the tambourines. Under her window they passed, and away into the night, until at last their sound was lost in the ceaseless, sullen tumult of Myrtle Street.

Mandany's Fool

By

Maria Louise Pool

MANDANY'S FOOL

“YE ain’t got hungry for termarters, be ye?”

Some one had knocked at the screen door, and as there was no response, a man’s strident, good-humored voice put the above question concerning tomatoes.

But somebody had heard.

A woman had been sitting in the kitchen with a pan of seek-no-further apples in her lap. She was paring and quartering these and then stabbing the quarters through and stringing them on yards of white twine, preparatory to festooning them on the clothes-horse which stood in the yard. This horse was already decorated profusely in this way. A cloud of wasps had flown from the drying fruit as the man walked up the path. He swung off his hat and waved the insects away.

“I say, have ye got hungry agin for termarters?” he repeated.

Then he rattled the screen; but it was hooked on the inside.

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He turned and surveyed the three windows that were visible in the bit of a house.

"They would n't both be gone, 'n' left them apples out," he said to himself. "I 'm 'bout sure Ann 's to home ; 'n' she 's the one I want to see."

A woman in the bed-room which opened from the kitchen was hurriedly smoothing her hair and peering into the glass. She was speaking aloud with the air of one who constantly talks to herself.

"Jest as sure 's I don't comb my hair the first thing, somebody comes."

She gave a last pat and went to the door. There was a faint smirk on her lips and a flush on her face.

Her tall figure was swayed by a slight, eager tremor as she saw who was standing there. She exclaimed : —

"Goodness me! 'T ain't you, Mr. Baker, is it? Won't ye walk right in? But I don't want no termar-ters ; they always go aginst me. Aunt Mandany ain't to home."

"Oh, ain't she?" was the brisk response. "Then I guess I will come in."

The speaker pushed open the now unfastened door

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and entered. He set his basket of tomatoes with a thump on the rug, and wiped his broad, red face.

“Fact is,” he said with a grin, “I knew she was gone. I seen her goin’ crosst the pastur’. That’s why I come now. I ain’t got no longin’ to see Aunt Mandany — no, sir-ee, not a grain of longin’ to see her. But I thought ’t would be agreeable to me to clap my eyes on to you.”

The woman simpered, made an inarticulate sound, and hurriedly resumed her seat and her apple-cutting.

“Won’t you se’ down, Mr. Baker?” she asked.

Her fingers trembled as she took the darning-needle and jabbed it through an apple quarter. The needle went into her flesh also. She gave a little cry and thrust her finger into her mouth. Her large, pale eyes turned wistfully towards her companion. The faded, already elderly mouth quivered.

“I ’m jest as scar’t ’s I c’n be if I see blood,” she whispered.

Mr. Baker’s heavy under lip twitched; his face softened. But he spoke roughly.

“You need n’t mind that bit er blood,” he said, “that won’t hurt nothin’. I don’t care if I do se’ down. I ain’t drove any this mornin’. I c’n jest

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as well as not take hold 'n' help ye. I s'pose Mandany left a thunderin' lot for ye to do while she's gone?"

"Two bushels," was the answer.

"The old cat! That's too much. But 't won't be for both of us, will it, Ann?"

The woman said, "No."

She looked for an instant intently at the man who had drawn his chair directly opposite her. He was already paring an apple.

"I d' know what to make of it," she said, still in a whisper.

"To make of what?" briskly.

"Why, when folks are so good to me 's you be."

"Oh, sho', now! Everybody ain't like your Aunt Mandany."

"'Sh! Don't speak so loud! Mebby she 'll be comin' back."

"No, she won't. 'N' no matter if she is."

The loud, confident tone rang cheerily in the room.

During the silence that followed Mr. Baker watched Ann's deft fingers.

"Everybody says you're real capable," he remarked.

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A joyous red covered Ann's face.

"I jest about do all the work here," she said.

She looked at the man again.

There was something curiously sweet in the simple face. The patient line at each side of the close, pale mouth had a strange effect upon Mr. Baker.

He had been known to say violently in conversation at the store that he "never seen Ann Tracy 'thout wantin' to thrash her Aunt Mandany."

"What in time be you dryin' seek-no-further for?" he now exclaimed with some fierceness. "They 're the flattest kind of apples I know of."

"That 's what Aunt says," was the reply; "she says they 're most as flat 's as I be, 'n' that 's flat 'nough."

These words were pronounced as if the speaker were merely stating a well-known fact.

"Then what does she do um for?" persisted Mr. Baker.

"She says they 're good 'nough to swop for groceries in the spring."

Mr. Baker made a deep gash in an apple, and held his tongue.

Mandany's Fool

Ann continued her work, but she took a good deal of seek-no-further with the skin in a way that would have shocked Aunt Mandany.

Suddenly she raised her eyes to the sturdy face opposite her and said:—

“I guess your wife had a real good time, did n’t she, Mr. Baker, when she was livin’?”

Mr. Baker dropped his knife. He glanced up and met the wistful gaze upon him.

Something that he had thought long dead stirred in his consciousness.

“I hope so,” he said gently. “I do declare I tried to make her have a good time.”

“How long ’s she be’n dead?”

“’Most ten year. We was livin’ down to Norris Corners then.”

The man picked up his knife and absently tried the edge of it on the ball of his thumb.

“I s’pose,” said Ann, “that folks are sorry when their wives die.”

Mr. Baker gave a short laugh.

“Wall, that depends.”

“Oh, does it? I thought folks had to love their wives, ’n’ be sorry when they died.”

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Here Mr. Baker laughed again. He made no other answer for several minutes. At last he said :

“ I was sorry enough when my wife died.”

A great pile of quartered apples was heaped up in the wooden bowl before either spoke again.

Then Ann exclaimed with a piteous intensity :

“ Oh, I ’m awful tired of bein’ Aunt Mandany’s fool!”

Mr. Baker stamped his foot involuntarily.

“ How jew know they call you that ?” he cried in a great voice.

“ I heard Jane Littlefield tell Mis’ Monk she hoped nobody ’d ask Mandany’s fool to the sociable. And Mr. Fletcher’s boy told me that ’s what folks called me.”

“ Damn Jane Littlefield ! Damn that little devil of a boy!”

These dreadful words burst out furiously.

Perhaps Ann did not look as shocked as she ought.

In a moment she smiled her immature, simple smile that had a touching appeal in it.

“ ’ T ain’t no use denyin’ it,” she said ; “ I ain’t jes’ like other folks, ’n’ that ’s a fact. I can’t think stiddy more ’n a minute. Things all run together,

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somehow. 'N' the back er my head 's odd 's it can be."

"Pooh! What of it? There can't any of us think stiddy; 'n' if we could what would it amount to, I should like to know? It would n't amount to a row of pins."

Ann dropped her work and clasped her hands. Mr. Baker saw that her hands were hard, and stained almost black on fingers and thumbs by much cutting of apples.

"Ye see," she said, in a tremulous voice, "sometimes I think if mother had lived she 'd er treated me so 't I could think stiddier. I s'pose mother 'd er loved me. They say mothers do. But Aunt Mandany told me mother died the year I got my fall from the cherry-tree. I was eight then. I don't remember nothin' 'bout it, nor 'bout anything much. Mr. Baker, do you remember your mother?"

Mr. Baker said "Yes," abruptly. Something made it impossible for him to say more.

"I d' know how 't is," went on the thin, minor voice, "but it always did seem to me 's though if I could remember my mother I could think stiddier, somehow. Do you think I could?"

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Mr. Baker started to his feet.

"I'll be dumb'd 'f I c'n stan' it," he shouted.

"No, nor I won't stan' it, nuther!"

He walked noisily across the room.

He came back and stood in front of Ann, who had patiently resumed work.

"Come," he said, "I think a lot of ye. Le's git married."

Ann looked up. She dropped her knife.

"Then I should live with you?" she asked.

"Of course."

She laughed.

There was so much of confident happiness in that laugh that the man's heart glowed youthfully.

"I shall be real glad to marry you, Mr. Baker," she said. Then, with pride, "'N' I c'n cook, 'n' I know first rate how to do housework."

She rose to her feet; her eyes shone.

Mr. Baker put his arm about her.

"Le's go right along now," he said, more quickly than he had yet spoken. "We'll call to the minister's 'n' engage him. You c'n stop there. We'll be married to-day."

"Can't ye wait till I c'n put on my bunnit 'n' shawl?" Ann asked.

Mandany's Fool

She left the room. In a few moments she returned dressed for going. She had a sheet of note-paper, a bottle of ink, and a pen in her hands.

"I c'n write," she said confidently, "'n' I call it fairer to leave word for Aunt Mandany."

"All right," was the response; "go ahead."

Mr. Baker said afterward that he never got much more nervous in his life than while Ann was writing that note. What if Mandany should appear! He was n't going to back out, but he did n't want to see that woman.

The ink was thick, the pen was like a pin, and Ann was a good while making each letter, but the task was at last accomplished. She held out the sheet to her companion.

"Ain't that right?" she asked.

Mr. Baker drew his face down solemnly as he read: —

DERE AUNT MANDANE: —

I'm so dretfull Tired of beeing youre fool that ime going too be Mr. Baker's. He askt me.

ANN.

"That's jest the thing," he said explosively.
"Now, come on."

By Maria Louise Pool

As they walked along in the hot fall sunshine Mr. Baker said earnestly : —

“ I ’m certain sure we sh’ll be ever so much happier.”

“ So ’m I,” Ann replied, with cheerful confidence.

They were on a lonely road, and they walked hand in hand.

“ I ’m goin’ to be good to ye,” said the man, with still more earnestness. Then, in a challenging tone, as if addressing the world at large, “ I guess ’t ain’t nobody’s business but our’n.”

Ann looked at him and smiled trustfully.

After a while he began to laugh.

“ I ’m thinkin’ of your Aunt Mandany when she reads that letter,” he explained.

The Way to Constantinople
By
Clinton Ross

THE WAY TO CONSTANTINOPLE

MRS. DENBY poured the tea.
“Now, speaking of Constantinople,” Denby began.

Mrs. Denby blushed. I envied Denby.

“Ah, yes,” said I, “I have read Gautier, and that is a very good monograph of Marion Crawford’s. I was there once myself.”

“Were you?” said Mrs. Denby, demurely.
“Do you take sugar?”

“Oh, tell me!” I began, for I saw I was expected to show some interest.

“Don’t, Dick,” began Mrs. Denby.

“Oh, it’s only Tom,” said Denby, fondly; but not half so fondly as he had before he had found her, and persuaded her, and — I always have had such bad luck with the woman whom it’s worth while trying to marry!

“You see, — it’s a silly story. Dick’s usually are,” began Mrs. Denby.

The Way to Constantinople

“ Oh, fiddlesticks ! ” said Denby. “ Now, you know — ”

“ Oh, if you must,” said Mrs. Denby, despairfully.

“ Paris was a glare of splendor that February, — after the North Atlantic,” Denby went on. “ Did you ever leave New York of a dismal day of winter fog and a week after find yourself in Havre ? The boulevards are gay, the shops resplendent. Paris is a different place from Paris in July, — when hordes of our countrymen swoop down on it like the Huns. It’s like the rural visitor doing Fifth Avenue in August, and wondering why New York is so much talked about. But Paris in February is the Paris one dreams of when the word is pronounced, with all its suggestiveness of the world’s gayety. Yet, it was cold that February, — as bitter as in New York ; and after coming back one night to my lodging on the Avenue Carnot, where the cab was unable to make its way because of the frozen sleet on the smooth paving of the hill the Avenue des Champs Elysées climbs, — that night I concluded I had not intended exchanging New York for wintry unpleasantness, and decided to go to Constantinople. Constantinople, where I had never been, seemed so

By Clinton Ross

far away, and I did not know that it, too, could be bleakly dismal in the spring. The next morning I booked on the Orient Express. That evening I was snugly put away in my compartment, and the morning after was looking on a Bavarian landscape."

"You always were impulsive," Mrs. Denby interrupted.

"Yes; nothing proves that more than my conduct the next morning at breakfast in the dining-car. I appeared late. The place was crowded. A very pretty girl —"

"Did you really think so then?" said Mrs. Denby.

"Oh, I did, or else I should n't have taken the seat opposite beside a little chap who was ogling and embarrassing her dreadfully."

"Such a man's horrid," commented Mrs. Denby.

"I saw at once he was one of those little Parisians, whose kind I know well, who in some way lose their appropriateness when transplanted. For I knew at once they were not acquaintances. The girl appeared alone, English or American — I could not be certain. Now, I was sure the man was objection-

The Way to Constantinople

able, — not quite a gentleman, — or, if he had been, he had distorted the quality.”

“Now you need n’t explain,” said Mrs. Denby. “My honest opinion is that you took the seat for exactly the same reason as he, because —”

“Because the girl was pretty?” said Denby.

“I did n’t say she was,” Mrs. Denby hastened to add.

“‘I beg pardon, Monsieur,’ said I to the man, when he glared. Presently the Swiss brought the young lady’s bill, when a strange agitation appeared in my vis-à-vis. I saw and felt for her. She had no money. She probably had her ticket, but had lost her purse. She did not attempt to go back to the Wagon Lit.

“‘I am going to Constantinople,’ she said.

“‘I beg pardon, Madame,’ began the Swiss.

“‘Cannot the bill —’

“‘I am sorry, Mademoiselle,’ said the Swiss, and he looked desolated, with a contrary gleam in his eye.

“Here the man by my side dropped from the category of the gentleman to that of the cad.

“‘If Mademoiselle will allow me,’ he began eagerly.

By Clinton Ross

"I leaned under the table, pretending to pick up a purse, which I really took from my pocket.

" 'I think this is your purse,' I said in English.

"For an instant she scanned me. The Frenchman looked daggers. She was blushing.

" 'Thank you,' said she, and I knew she was an American ; 'how stupid of me to have dropped it.'

"And from my purse she paid the bill, nodded to me, ignoring the Frenchman, and without further word left the buffet.

"The particular French cad evidently wanted to pick a quarrel with me, and for a moment I was debating with myself whether I might not have been an ass. A fool's money goes the way of his scanty wit. The girl might appear pretty, innocent, attractive — and yet — I swallowed my coffee, and returned to my compartment, which I had to myself. The door was open. Presently I saw the young woman of the breakfast-table walking up and down the aisle. I was determined I should not notice her. Suddenly I heard her voice at the door.

" 'Sir, what can you think of me ? But I could n't help it, really, — I have lost my purse. Here is yours ; I will return the six francs at Constantinople.'

The Way to Constantinople

“I saw a tear ; and I was sure my knowledge of femininity — ”

“ Conceited,” said Mrs. Denby.

“ Could not be at fault,” Denby continued. “ I bowed.

“ ‘ I ’m glad to be able to make the loan — ’ I began.

“ ‘ It ’s good of you,’ said she.

“ ‘ But if you have lost all your money, I don’t see — ’

“ ‘ What ?’

“ ‘ How can you avoid borrowing more ?’

“ ‘ That man at the table made me feel so detestably,’ she began.

“ ‘ Oh, you must n’t mind !’

“ ‘ And you really are so nice — What do you know about me ?’

“ ‘ Oh, I can tell.’

“ ‘ I think you generally can,’ said she.

“ ‘ Is n’t that interesting ?’ said I, pointing out of the window at some peasants in the field.

“ ‘ Ah, yes !’ said she.

“ ‘ May I sit down ?’ said I.

“ We had reached her seat.

By Clinton Ross

“ ‘Why, certainly, I shall be glad to have you.’

“ ‘How does it happen —’ I began after a moment.

“ ‘Oh, here’s your purse,’ she interrupted.

“ ‘Now, really, please. It won’t inconvenience me in the least. There are only five louis there, and I have my portemonnaie besides, and —’

“ ‘And?’

“ ‘I believe I said I should be delighted.’

“ ‘Oh, you did, but you began a —’

“ ‘What?’ said I, feeling uncomfortable.

“ ‘A question. I know what it was.’

“ ‘Well, if you do —’

“ ‘I’m from Illinois. We don’t regard chaperones as so necessary; besides —’

“ ‘Besides?’ I could n’t resist saying.

“ ‘I believe women should take care of themselves.’

“ ‘But they can’t — always.’

“ ‘You mean —’ she began rather indignantly.

“ ‘Well — well — they sometimes have to borrow, you know.’

“ ‘That’s — that’s mean of you.’

“ ‘Oh, I — I beg pardon.’

“ ‘You need n’t. I wish I could return your

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six francs. I am going to Constantinople to meet my father, who is up from the east. I went all alone — because — there was nobody.'

" 'I'm sorry,' said I. 'Now don't mind me, please.'

" She looked at me then.

" 'I suppose I shall have to tolerate you. You are the only American on this train.'

" 'I consider myself your guardian, — with letters testamentary.'

" 'I am forced to it,' said she, but smiling."

" Now, she did n't smile," said Mrs. Denby.

" 'Oh,' said I, 'this is deliciously lucky. I thought I should have this ride alone.'

" At this moment — for some time had passed — the Swiss announced luncheon, which she — "

" How horridly forward it all sounds," interrupted Mrs. Denby.

" Which she took with me."

" Oh, dear, I wonder at it," said Mrs. Denby.

" She had to," said Denby.

" Yes, of course, you had the money," said Mrs. Denby.

" Well, she tolerated — "

By Clinton Ross

“That’s the word, I think,” assented Mrs. Denby.

“We walked the station at Vienna. We took an ice at Buda-Pesth. We wondered about Queen Nathalie at Belgrade. We bought beads at Sofia. We shivered over the Bulgarian soldiers squatting on the platform against Turkish banditti. I told her how an Orient Express had been held up the autumn before, a Frankfort banker abstracted, and his ears sent to his counting-house with a request for a gold payment or else his tongue would follow.”

“That was horrid of you,” said Mrs. Denby.

“Well, at Constantinople, her father was not there.”

“It was terrible,” said Mrs. Denby.

“But I knew the American Consul’s wife, who took in the situation.”

“It was very nice of her,” said Mrs. Denby.

“We roamed about the Pera ; sentimentalized in San Sofia ; bargained — ”

“With your money,” said Mrs. Denby.

“In the bazaars. We rode in a palanquin, and drove to the Sweet Waters of Europe, danced at the Russian Legation, — where she was irresistible.”

The Way to Constantinople

“Your eyes!” said Mrs. Denby, with severe sarcasm.

“One day her father appeared. She counted out three louis —”

“And five francs sixty centimes,” said Mrs. Denby.

“‘That is n’t all,’ said I.

“‘Why, let me see,’ she began.

“‘It is n’t all,’ said I. ‘There’s my heart.’”

“It was a very silly speech — not at all original,” said Mrs. Denby. “I should think you would be ashamed to repeat it — before visitors. But, Mr. Pemberton, you have n’t told me whether you take sugar?”

“Sugar, thanks,” said I. “That’s a good story. It reminds me of an episode in Hunter’s novel —”

“This is a better story,” said Denby.

“Dick!” said Mrs. Denby, looking at him with sudden earnestness. “Do you mean that — now!”

I felt, as is often the case lately, the superfluous bachelor. I went to call on Sally Waters.

The Old Partisan
By
Octave Thanet



THE OLD PARTISAN

I SAT so far back in the gallery that my opinion of my delegate friend dwindled with every session. Nevertheless my unimportant seat had its advantages. I could see the vast assembly and watch the throbbing of the Republican pulse if I could not hear its heartbeats. Therefore, perhaps, I studied my neighbors more than I might study them under different circumstances. The great wooden hall had its transient and unsubstantial character stamped on every bare wooden joist and unclimbed nail. It was gaudy with flags and bunting and cheap portraits. There were tin bannerets crookedly marshalled on the floor, to indicate the homes of the different States. A few delegates, doubtless new to the business and over-zealous, were already on the floor, but none of the principals were visible. They were perspiring and arguing in those committee rooms, those hotel lobbies and crowded hotel rooms where the real business of the convention was already done and neatly pre-

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pared for presentation to the nation. I had nothing to keep me from studying my neighbors. In front of me sat two people who had occupied the same seats at every session that I was present, a young girl and an old man. The girl wore the omnipresent shirt-waist (of pretty blue and white tints, with snowy cuffs and collar), and her green straw hat was decked with blue corn-flowers, from which I inferred that she had an eye on the fashions. Her black hair was thick and glossy under the green straw. I thought that she had a graceful neck. It was very white. Whiter than her face, which had a touch of sunburn, as if she were often out in the open air. Somehow I concluded that she was a shop-girl and rode a wheel. If I were wrong it is not likely that I shall ever know.

The old man I fancied was not so old as he looked ; his delicate, haggard profile may have owed its sunken lines and the dim eye to sickness rather than to years. He wore the heavy black broad-cloth of the rural politician, and his coat sagged over his narrow chest as if he had left his waistcoat at home. On his coat lapel were four old-fashioned Blaine badges. Incessantly he fanned himself.

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“It can’t be they ain’t going to nominate him to-day?” he asked rather than asserted, his voice breaking on the higher notes, the mere wreck of a voice.

“Oh, maybe later,” the girl reassured him.

“Well, I wanted to attend a Republican convention once more before I died. Your ma would have it I was n’t strong enough; but I knew better; you and I knew better; did n’t we, Jenny?”

She made no answer except to pat his thin, ribbed brown hand with her soft, white, slim one; but there was a world of sympathy in the gesture and her silent smile.

“I wonder what your ma said when she came downstairs and found the letter, and us gone,” he cackled with the garrulous glee of a child recounting successful mischief; “made me think of the times when you was little and I stole you away for the circus. Once, your pa thought you was lost—’member? And once, you had on your school-dress and you’d tore it—she did scold you that time. But we had fun when they used to let me have money, did n’t we, Jenny?”

“Well, now I earn money, we have good times,

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too, grandpa," said Jenny, smiling the same tender, comprehending smile.

"We do that; I don't know what I would do 'cept for you, lambie, and this is — this is a grand time, Jenny, you look and listen; it's a great thing to see a nation making its principles and its president — and such a president!"

He half turned his head as he spoke, with a mounting enthusiasm, thus bringing his flushing face and eager eyes — no longer dim — into the focus of his next neighbor's bright gray eyes. The neighbor was a young man, not very young but hardly to be called elderly, of an alert bearing and kindly smile.

"I think him a pretty fair man myself," said the other with a jocose understatement; "I come from his town."

What was there in such a simple statement to bring a distinctly anxious look into the young girl's soft eyes? There it was; one could not mistake it.

"Well!" said the old man; there was a flattering deference in his voice. "Well, well. And — and maybe you've seen him lately?" The quavering tones sharpened with a keener feeling; it was almost as if the man were inquiring for some

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one on whom he had a great stake of affection. "How did he look? Was he better, stronger?"

"Oh, he looked elegant," said the Ohio man, easily, but with a disconcerted side glance at the girl whose eyes were imploring him.

"I've been a Blaine man ever since he was run, the time Bob Ingersoll nominated him," said the old man, who sighed as if relieved. "I was at that convention and heard the speech —"

"Ah, that was a speech to hear," said a man behind, and two or three men edged their heads nearer.

The old Republican straightened his bent shoulders, his winter-stung features softened and warmed at the manifestation of interest, his voice sank to the confidential undertone of the narrator.

"You're right, sir, right; it was a magnificent speech. I can see him jest as he stood there, a stoutish, good-looking man, smooth-faced, his eye straight ahead, and an alternate that sat next me — I was an alternate; I've been an alternate four times; I could have been a delegate, but I says, 'No, abler men than me are wanting it; I'm willing to fight in the ranks.' But I wished I had a

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vote, a free vote that day, I tell you. The alternate near me, he says, 'You'll hear something fine now; I've heard him speak.' "

"You did, too, I guess."

"We could hear from the first minute. That kinder fixed our attention. He had a mellow, rich kind of voice that melted into our ears. We found ourselves listening and liking him from the first sentence. At first he was as quiet as a summer breeze, but presently he began to warm up, and the words flowed out like a stream of jewels. It was electrifying: it was thrilling, sir; it took us off our feet before we knew it, and when he came to the climax, those of us that weren't yelling in the aisles were jumping up and down on our chairs! I know I found myself prancing up and down in my own hat on a chair, swinging somebody else's hat and screaming at the top of my voice, with the tears running down my cheeks. God! sir, there were men there on their feet cheering their throats out that had to vote against him afterwards—had to because they were there instructed—no more free will than a checked trunk!" The light died out of his face. "Yes, sir, a great speech; never a greater ever

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made at a convention anywhere, never so great a speech, whoever made it: but it did no good, he was n't nominated, and when we did nominate him we were cheated out of our victory. Well, we'll do better this day."

"We will that," said the other man, heartily;
"McKinley —"

"You'll excuse me —" the old man struck in with a deprecating air, yet under the apology something fiercely eager and anxious that glued the hearer's eyes to his quivering old face — "you'll excuse me. I — I am a considerable of an invalid and I don't keep the run of things as I used to. You see I live with my daughter, and you know how women folks are, fretting lest things should make you sick, and my girl she worries so, me reading the papers. Fact is I got a shock once, an awful shock," he shivered involuntarily and his dim eyes clouded, "and it worried her seeing me read. Had n't ought to; it don't worry Jenny here, who often gets me a paper, quiet like; but you know how it is with women — it's easier giving them their head a little — and so I don't see many papers, and I kinder dropped off. It seems queer, but I don't exactly sense it about

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this McKinley. Is he running against Blaine or jest for vice?"

The girl, under some feminine pretext of dropping and reaching for her handkerchief, threw upward a glance of appeal at the interlocutor. Hurriedly she stepped into the conversation. "My grandfather read a false report about — about Mr. Blaine's sickness, and he was not well at the time and it brought on a bad attack."

"I understand," said the listener, with a grave nod of his head and movement of his eyes in the girl's direction.

"But about McKinley?" the old man persisted.

"He's for vice-president," the girl announced, her eyes fixed on the hesitating man from Canton. I have often admired the intrepid fashion in which a woman will put her conscience at a moral hedge, while a man of no finer spiritual fibre will be straining his eyes to find a hole through which he can crawl.

"McKinley is not opposed to Blaine, is he?" she asked the man.

"The Republican party has no name that is more loved than that of James G. Blaine," said the man, gravely.

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“That ’s so, that ’s so !” the old partisan assented eagerly ; “ to my mind he ’s the logical candidate.”

The Canton man nodded, and asked if he had ever seen Blaine.

“ Once, only once. I was on a delegation sent to wait on him and ask him to our town to speak — he was in Cincinnati. I held out my hand when my turn came, and the chairman nearly knocked the breath out of me by saying, ‘ Here ’s the man gave more to our campaign fund and worked harder than any man in the county, and we all worked hard for you, too.’ Well, Mr. Blaine looked at me. You know the intent way he looks. He has the most wonderful eyes ; look right at you and seem to bore into you like a gimlet. I felt as if he was looking right down into my soul, and I tell you I was glad, for I choked up so I couldn’t find a word, not a word, and I was ready and fluent enough in those days, too, I can tell you ; but I stood there filling up, and squeezed his hand and gulped and got red, like a fool. But he understood. ‘ I have heard of your loyalty to Republican principles, Mr. Painter,’ says he, in that beautiful voice of his that was like a violin ; and I burst in — I couldn’t help it — ‘ It

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ain't loyalty to Republican principles, it's to you.' I said that right out. And he smiled, and said he, 'Well, that's wrong, but it is n't for me to quarrel with you there, Mr. Painter,' and then they pushed me along: but twice while the talk was going on I saw him look my way and caught his eye, and he smiled, and when we were all shaking hands for good-bye he shook hands with a good firm grip, and said he, 'Good-bye, Mr. Painter; I hope we shall meet again.' "

The old man drew a long sigh. "Those few moments paid for everything," he said. "I've never seen him since. I've been sick and lost money. I ain't the man I was. I never shall be put on any delegation again, or be sent to any convention; but I thought if I could only go once more to a Republican convention and hear them holler for Blaine, and holler once more myself, I'd be willinger to die. And I told Tom Hale that, and he and Jenny raised the money. Yes, Jenny, I'm going to tell — he and Jenny put off being married a bit so's I could go, and go on plenty of money. Jenny, she worked a month longer to have plenty, and Tom, he slipped ten dollars into my hand unbeknown to her,

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jest as we were going, so I'd always have a dime to give the waiter or the porter. I was never one of these hayseed farmers too stingy to give a colored boy a dime when he'd done his best. I did n't need no money for badges ; I got my old badges — see ! ”

He pushed out the lapel of his coat, covered with those old-fashioned frayed bits of tinsel and ribbon, smiling confidently. The girl had flushed crimson to the rim of her white collar ; but there was not a trace of petulance in her air ; and, all at once looking at him, her eyes filled with tears.

“Tom's an awful good fellow,” he said, “an awful good fellow.”

“I'm sure of that,” said the Canton man, with the frank American friendliness, making a little bow in Miss Jenny's direction ; “but see here, Mr. Painter, do you come from Izard ? Are you the man that saved the county for the Republicans, by mortgaging his farm and then going on a house to house canvass ? ”

“That's me,” the old man acquiesced, blushing with pleasure ; “I did n't think, though, that it was known outside — ”

“Things go further than you guess. I'm a

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newspaper man, and I can tell you that I shall speak of it again in my paper. Well, I guess they've got through with their mail, and the platform's coming in."

Thus he brushed aside the old man's agitated thanks.

"One moment," said the old man, "who — who's going to nominate him?"

For the space of an eyeblink the kindly Canton man looked embarrassed, then he said, briskly: "Foraker, Foraker of Ohio — he's the principal one. That's he now, chairman of the committee on resolutions. He's there, the tall man with the mustache —"

"Is n't that elderly man, with the stoop shoulders and the chin beard and caved-in face, Teller?" It was a man near me, on the seat behind, who spoke, tapping the Canton man with his fan, to attract attention; already the pitiful concerns of the old man who was "a little off" (as I had heard some one on the seat whisper) were sucked out of notice in the whirlpool of the approaching political storm.

"Yes, that's Teller," answered the Canton man, his mouth straightening and growing thin.

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“Is it to be a bolt?”

The Canton man nodded, at which the other whistled and communicated the information to his neighbors, one of whom remarked, “Let ’em bolt and be d—!” A subtle excitement seemed to communicate its vibrations to all the gallery. Perhaps I should except the old partisan; he questioned the girl in a whisper, and then, seeming to be satisfied, watched the strange scene that ensued with an expression of patient weariness. The girl explained parts of the platform to him and he assented; it was good Republican doctrine, he said, but what did they mean with all this talk against the money; were they having trouble with the mining States again? The Canton man stopped to explain—he certainly was good-humored.

During the next twenty minutes, filled as they were with savage emotion, while the galleries, like the floor, were on their chairs yelling, cheering, brandishing flags and fists and fans and pampas plumes of red, white, and blue at the little band of silver men who marched through the ranks of their former comrades, he stood, he waved his fan in his feeble old hand, but he did not shout. “You must excuse

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me," said he, "I'm all right on the money question, but I'm saving my voice to shout for *him*!"

"That's right," said the Canton man; but he took occasion to cast a backward glance which I met, and it said as plainly as a glance can speak, "I wish I were out of this!"

Meanwhile, with an absent but happy smile, the old Blaine man was beating time to the vast waves of sound that rose and swelled above the band, above the cheering, above the cries of anger and scorn, the tremendous chorus that had stiffened men's hearts as they marched to death and rung through streets filled with armies and thrilled the waiting hearts at home: —

"Three cheers for the red, white, and blue!

Three cheers for the red, white, and blue!

The army and navy forever, three cheers for the
red, white, and blue!"

But when the chairman had stilled the tumult and made his grim comment, "There appear to be enough delegates left to transact business," the old partisan cast his eyes down to the floor with a chuckle. "I can't see the hole they made, it's so

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small. Say, ain't he a magnificent chairman ; you can hear every word he says ! ”

“ Bully chairman,” said a cheerful “ rooter ” in the rear, who had enjoyed the episode more than words can say, and had cheered the passing of Silver with such choice quotations from popular songs as “ Good-bye, my lover, good-bye,” and “ Just tell them that you saw me,” and plainly felt that he, too, had adorned the moment. “ I nearly missed coming this morning, and I would n't have missed it for a tenner ; they 're going to nominate now.”

The old man caught his breath ; then he smiled. “ I 'll help you shout pretty soon,” said he, while he sat down very carefully.

The “ rooter,” a good-looking young fellow with a Reed button and three or four gaudy badges decking his crash coat, nodded and tapped his temple furtively, still retaining his expression of radiant good-nature. The Canton man nodded and frowned.

I felt that the Canton man need not be afraid. Somehow we were all tacitly taking care that this poor, bewildered soul should not have its little dream of loyal, unselfish satisfaction dispelled.

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“Ah, my countrymen,” I thought, “you do a hundred crazy things, you crush *les convenances* under foot, you can be fooled by frantic visionaries — but how I love you !”

It was Baldwin of Iowa that made the first speech. He was one of the very few men — I had almost said of the two men — that we in the galleries had the pleasure of hearing ; and we could hear every word.

He began with a glowing tribute to Blaine. At the first sentence, our old man flung his gray head in the air with the gesture of the war horse when he catches the first, far-off scream of the trumpet. He leaned forward, his features twitching, his eyes burning ; the fan dropped out of his limp hand ; his fingers, rapping his palm, clenched and loosened themselves unconsciously in an overpowering agitation. His face was white as marble, with ominous blue shadows ; but every muscle was astrain ; his chest expanded ; his shoulders drew back ; his mouth was as strong and firm as a young man. For a second we could see what he had been at his prime.

Then the orator's climax came, and the name — the magic name that was its own campaign cry in itself.

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The old partisan leaped to his feet ; he waved his hands above his head ; wild, strange, in his white flame of excitement. He shouted ; and we all shouted with him, the McKinley man and the Reed man vying with each other (I here offer my testimony to the scope and quality of that young Reed man's voice), and the air rang about us : "Blaine ! Blaine ! James G. Blaine !" He shrieked the name again and again, goading into life the waning applause. Then in an instant his will snapped under the strain ; his gray beard tilted in the air ; his gray head went back on his neck.

The Canton man and I caught him in time to ease the fall. We were helped to pull him into the aisle. There were four of us by this time, his granddaughter and the Reed "rooter," besides the Canton man and myself.

We carried him into the wide passageway that led to the seats. The Reed young man ran for water, and, finding none, quickly returned with a glass of lemonade (he was a young fellow ready in shifts), and with it we bathed the old man's face.

Presently he came back, by degrees, to the world ; he was not conscious, but we could see that he was not going to die.

The Old Partisan

“He’ll be all right in no time,” declared the Reed man. “You had better go back and get your seats, and keep mine !”

I assured both men that I could not return for more than a short time, having an engagement for luncheon.

“That’s all right,” said the Reed man, turning to the Canton man, “I ain’t shouting when Foraker comes; you are. You go back and keep my seat; I’ll come in later on Hobart.”

So the kindly Canton man returned to the convention for which he was longing, and we remained in our little corner by the window, the young girl fanning the old man, and the young man on the watch for a boy with water. He darted after one; and then the girl turned to me.

No one disturbed us. Below, the traffic of a great city roared up to us and a brass band clanged merrily. The crowd hurried past, drawn by the tidings that “the fight was on,” it choked the outlets and suffocated the galleries.

“He’s been that way ever since he read, suddenly, that Blaine was dead,” she said, lowering her voice to keep it safe from his failing ears; “he

By Octave Thanet

had a kind of a stroke, and ever since he's had the notion that Blaine was alive and was going to be nominated, and his heart was set on going here. Mother was afraid ; but when — when he cried to go, I could not help taking him — I did n't know but maybe it might help him ; he was such a smart man and such a good man ; and he has had trouble about mortgaging the farm ; and he worked so hard to get the money back, so mother would feel right. All through the hot weather he worked, and I guess that's how it happened. You don't think it's hurt him ? The doctor said he might go. He told T——, a gentleman friend of mine who asked him."

"Oh, dear, no," said I ; "it has been good for him."

I asked for her address, which fortunately was near, and I offered her the cab that was waiting for me. I had some ado to persuade her to accept it ; but when I pointed to her grandfather's pale face she did accept it, thanking me in a simple but touching way, and, of course, begging me to visit her at Izard, Ohio.

All this while we had been sedulously fanning the

The Old Partisan

old man, who would occasionally open his eyes for a second, but gave no other sign of returning consciousness.

The young Reed man came back with the water. He was bathing the old man's forehead in a very skillful and careful way, using my handkerchief, when an uproar of cheering shook the very floor under us and the rafters overhead.

"Who is it?" the old man inquired, feebly.

"Foraker! Foraker!" bellowed the crowd.

"He's nominated him!" muttered the old man; but this time he did not attempt to rise. With a smile of great content he leaned against his granddaughter's strong young frame and listened, while the cheers swelled into a deafening din, an immeasurable tumult of sound, out of which a few strong voices shaped the chorus of the Battle Cry of Freedom, to be caught up by fifteen thousand throats and pealed through the walls far down the city streets to the vast crowd without.

The young Reed "boomer," carried away by the moment, flung his free hand above his head and yelled defiantly: "Three cheers for the man from Maine!" Instantly he caught at his wits, his color

By Octave Thanet

turned, and he lifted an abashed face to the young girl.

“But, really, you know, that ain’t giving nothing away,” he apologized, plucking up heart. “May I do it again?”

The old partisan’s eye lighted. “Now they’re shouting! That’s like old times! Yes, do it again, boy! Blaine! Blaine! James G. Blaine!”

He let us lead him to the carriage, the rapturous smile still on his lips. The “rooter” and I wormed our way through the crowd back to the seats which the kind Canton man had kept for us.

We were quite like old acquaintances now; and he turned to me at once, “Was there ever a politician or a statesman, since Henry Clay, loved so well as James G. Blaine?”

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